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THE COAST of BOHEMIA

W. D. Howells

From Mary
to
Edith

Merry Christmas. 1900

✠ 70

Elson Photogravure Boston

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA

By W. D. Howells

Biographical Edition

NEW YORK AND LONDON
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
1899

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INTRODUCTORY SKETCH.

In one of the old-fashioned books for children there was a story of the adventures of a cent (or perhaps that coin of older lineage, a penny) told by itself, which came into my mind when the publishers suggested that the readers of a new edition of this book might like to know how it happened to be written. I promptly fancied the book speaking, and taking upon itself the burden of autobiography, which we none of us find very heavy; and no sooner had I done so than I began actually to hear from it in a narrative of much greater distinctness than I could have supplied for it.

"You must surely remember," it protested to my forgetfulness, "that you first thought of me in anything like definite shape as you stood looking on at the trotting-races of a county fair in Northern Ohio, and that I began to gather color and character while you loitered through the art-building, and dwelt with pitying interest upon the forlorn, unpromising exhibits there.

"But previous to this, my motive existed somewhere in that nebulous fore-life where both men and books have their impalpable beginning; for even you cannot have forgotten that when a certain passionately enterprising young editor asked you for a novel to be printed in his journal, you so far imagined me as to say that I would be about a girl. When you looked over those hapless works of art at the Pymantoning County Fair, you thought, 'What a good thing it would be to have a nice village girl, with a real but limited gift, go from here to study art in New York! And get in love there! And married!' Cornelia and her mother at once stepped out of the inchoate; Ludlow advanced from another quarter of Chaos, and I began really to be.

"The getting me down on paper was a much later affair—nearly two years later. There were earlier engagements to be met; there was an exciting editorial episode to be got behind you; and there was material for a veridical representation of the ardent young life of the New York Synthesis of Art Studies to be gathered as nearly at first hands and as furtively as possible.

"I should be almost ashamed to remind you of the clandestine means you employed before you were forced to a frankness alien to your nature, and went and threw yourself on the mercy of a Member who, upon your avowing your purpose, took you through the schools of the Synthesis and instructed you in its operation. Not satisfied with this, you got an undergraduate of the Synthesis to coach you as to its social

side, and while she was consenting to put it all down in writing for your convenience, you were shamelessly making notes of her boarding-house, as the very place to have Cornelia come to.

"Your methods were at first so secret and uncandid that I wonder I ever came to be the innocent book I am; and I feel that the credit is far less due to you than to the friends who helped you. But I am glad to remember how you got your come-uppings when, long after, a student of the Synthesis whom you asked, in your latent vanity, how she thought that social part of me was managed, answered, 'Well, any one could see that it was studied altogether from the outside, that it wasn't at all the *spirit* of the Synthesis.'

"It was enough almost to make me doubt myself, but I recovered my belief in my own truth when I reflected that it was merely a just punishment for you. I could expose you in other points, if I chose, and show what slight foundations you built my facts and characters upon; but perhaps that would be ungrateful. You were at least a doting parent, if not a wise one, and in your fondness you did your best to spoil me. You gave me two heroines, and you know very well that before you were done you did not know but you preferred Charmian to Cornelia. And you had nothing whatever to build Charmian upon, not the slightest suggestion from life, where you afterwards encountered her Egyptian profile! I think I ought to say that you had never been asked to a Synthesis dance when you

wrote that account of one in me; and though you have often been asked since, you have never had the courage to go for fear of finding out how little it was like your description.

"But if Charmian was created out of nothing, what should you say if I were frank about the other characters of my story? Could you deny that the drummer who was first engaged to Cornelia was anything more than a materialization from seeing a painter very long ago make his two fingers do a ballet-dance? Or that Ludlow was not at first a mere pointed beard and a complexion glimpsed in a slim young Cuban one night at Saratoga? Or that Cornelia's mother existed by any better right than your once happening to see a poor lady try to hide the gap in her teeth when she smiled?

"When I think what a thing of shreds and patches I am, I wonder that I have any sort of individual temperament or consciousness at all. But I know that I have, and that you wrote me with pleasure and like me still. You think I have form, and that, if I am not very serious, I am sincere, and that somehow I represent a phase of our droll American civilization truly enough. I know you were vexed when some people said I did not go far enough, and insisted that the coast of Bohemia ought to have been the whole kingdom. As if I should have cared to be that! There are shady places inland where I should not have liked my girls to be, and where I think my young men would

not have liked to meet them; and I am glad you kept me within the sweet, pure breath of the sea. I think I am all the better book for that, and, if you are fond of me, you have your reasons. I—"

"Upon my word," I interrupted at this point, "it seems to me that you are saying rather more for yourself than I could say for you, if you *are* one of my spoiled children. Don't you think we had both better give the reader a chance, now?"

"Oh, if there are to be any readers!" cried the book, and lapsed into the silence of print.

W. D. Howells.

THE COAST OF BOHEMIA.

I.

THE forty-sixth annual fair of the Pymantoning County Agricultural Society was in its second day. The trotting-matches had begun, and the vast majority of the visitors had abandoned the other features of the exhibition for this supreme attraction. They clustered four or five deep along the half-mile of railing that enclosed the track, and sat sweltering in the hot September sun, on the benching of the grand-stand that flanked a stretch of the course. Boys selling lemonade and peanuts, and other boys with the score of the races, made their way up and down the seats with shrill cries; now and then there was a shriek of girls' laughter from a group of young people calling to some other group, or struggling for a programme caught back and forth; the young fellows shouted to each other jokes that were lost in mid-air; but, for the most part, the crowd was a very

silent one, grimly intent upon the rival sulkies as they flashed by and lost themselves in the clouds that thickened over the distances of the long, dusty loop. Here and there some one gave a shout as a horse broke, or settled down to his work under the gutturai snarl of his driver; at times the whole throng burst into impartial applause as a horse gained or lost a length; but the quick throb of the hoofs on the velvety earth and the whir of the flying wheels were the sounds that chiefly made themselves heard.

The spectacle had the importance which multitude gives, and Ludlow found in it the effects which he hoped to get again in his impression. He saw the deep purples which he looked to see with eyes trained by the French masters of his school to find them, and the indigo blues, the intense greens, the rainbow oranges and scarlets; and he knew just how he should give them. In the light of that vast afternoon sky, cloudless, crystalline in its clearness, no brilliancy of rendering could be too bold.

If he had the courage of his convictions, this purely American event could be reported on his canvas with all its native character; and yet it could be made to appeal to the enlightened eye with the charm of a French subject, and impressionism could be fully

justified of its follower in Pymantoning as well as in Paris. That golden dust along the track; the level tops of the buggies drawn up within its ellipse, and the groups scattered about in gypsy gayety on the grass there; the dark blur of men behind the barrier; the women, with their bright hats and parasols, massed flower-like, — all made him long to express them in lines and dots and breadths of pure color. He had caught the vital effect of the whole, and he meant to interpret it so that its truth should be felt by all who had received the light of the new faith in painting, who believed in the prismatic colors as in the ten commandments, and who hoped to be saved by tone-contrasts. For the others, Ludlow was at that day too fanatical an impressionist to care. He owed a duty to France no less than to America, and he wished to fulfil it in a picture which should at once testify to the excellence of the French method and the American material. At twenty-two, one is often much more secure and final in one's conclusions than one is afterwards.

He was vexed that a lingering doubt of the subject had kept him from bringing a canvas with him at once, and recording his precious first glimpses of it. But he meant to come to the trotting-match the next day again, and then he hoped to get back to his primal

impression of the scene, now so vivid in his mind. He made his way down the benches, and out of the enclosure of the track. He drew a deep breath, full of the sweet smell of the bruised grass, forsaken now by nearly all the feet that had trodden it. A few old farmers, who had failed to get places along the railing and had not cared to pay for seats on the stand, were loitering about, followed by their baffled and disappointed wives. The men occasionally stopped at the cattle-pens, but it was less to look at the bulls and boars and rams which had taken the premiums, and wore cards or ribbons certifying the fact, than to escape a consciousness of their partners, harassingly taciturn or voluble in their reproach. A number of these embittered women brokenly fringed the piazza of the fair-house, and Ludlow made his way toward them with due sympathy for their poor little tragedy, so intelligible to him through the memories of his own country-bred youth. He followed with his pity those who sulked away through the deserted aisles of the building, and nursed their grievance among the prize fruits and vegetables, and the fruits and vegetables that had not taken the prizes. They were more censorious than they would have been perhaps if they had not been defeated themselves;

he heard them dispute the wisdom of most of the awards as the shoutings and clappings from the race-track penetrated the lonely hall. They creaked wearily up and down in their new shoes or best shoes, and he knew how they wished themselves at home and in bed, and wondered why they had ever been such fools as to come, anyway. Occasionally, one of their husbands lagged in, as if in search of his wife, but kept at a safe distance, after seeing her, or hung about with a group of other husbands, who could not be put to shame or suffering as they might if they had appeared singly.

II.

LUDLOW believed that if the right fellow ever came to the work, he could get as much pathos out of our farm folks as Millet got out of his Barbizon peasants. But the fact was that he was not the fellow; he wanted to paint beauty not pathos; and he thought, so far as he thought ethically about it, that the Americans needed to be shown the festive and joyous aspects of their common life. To discover and to represent these was his pleasure as an artist, and his duty as a citizen. He suspected, though, that the trotting-match was the only fact of the Pymantoning County Fair that could be persuaded to lend itself to his purpose. Certainly, there was nothing in the fair-house, with those poor, dreary old people straggling through it, to gladden an artistic conception. Agricultural implements do not group effectively, or pose singly with much picturesqueness; tall stalks of corn, mammoth squashes, huge apples and potatoes want the beauty and quality that belong to them out of doors, when they are gathered into the sections of a county fair-house;

piles of melons fail of their poetry on a wooden floor, and heaps of grapes cannot assert themselves in a very bacchanal profusion against the ignominy of being spread upon long tables and ticketed with the names of their varieties and exhibitors.

Ludlow glanced at them, to right and left, as he walked through the long, barnlike building, and took in with other glances the inadequate decorations of the graceless interior. His roving eye caught the lettering over the lateral archways, and with a sort of contemptuous compassion he turned into the Fine Arts Department.

The fine arts were mostly represented by photographs and crazy quilts; but there were also tambourines and round brass plaques painted with flowers, and little satin banners painted with birds or autumn leaves, and gilt rolling-pins with vines. There were medley-pictures contrived of photographs cut out and grouped together in novel and unexpected relations; and there were set about divers patterns and pretences in keramics, as the decoration of earthen pots and jars was called. Besides these were sketches in oil and charcoal, which Ludlow found worse than the more primitive things, with their second-hand *chic* picked up in a tenth-rate school. He began to ask

himself whether people tasteless enough to produce these inanities and imagine them artistic, could form even the subjects of art; he began to have doubts of his impression of the trotting-match, its value, its possibility of importance. The senseless ugliness of the things really hurt him: his worship of beauty was a sort of religion, and their badness was a sort of blasphemy. He could not laugh at them; he wished he could; and his first impulse was to turn and escape from the Fine Arts Department, and keep what little faith in the artistic future of the country he had been able to get together during his long sojourn out of it. Since his return he had made sure of the feeling for color and form with which his country-women dressed themselves. There was no mistake about that; even here, in the rustic heart of the continent he had seen costumes which had touch and distinction; and it could not be that the instinct which they sprang from should go for nothing in the arts supposed higher than mantua-making and millinery. The village girls whom he saw so prettily gowned and picturesquely hatted on the benches out there by the race-course, could it have been they who committed these atrocities? Or did these come up from yet deeper depths of the country, where the vague, shallow talk about art going on for

the past decade was having its first crude effect? Ludlow was exasperated as well as pained, for he knew that the pretty frocks and hats expressed a love of dressing prettily, which was honest and genuine enough, while the unhappy effects about him could spring only from a hollow vanity far lower than a woman's wish to be charming. It was not an innate impulse which produced them, but a sham ambition, implanted from without, and artificially stimulated by the false and fleeting mood of the time. They must really hamper the growth of æsthetic knowledge among people who were not destitute of the instinct.

He exaggerated the importance of the fact with the sensitiveness of a man to whom æsthetic cultivation was all-important. It appeared to him a far greater evil than it was; it was odious to him, like a vice; it was almost a crime. He spent a very miserable time in the Fine Arts Department of the Pymantoning County Agricultural Fair; and in a kind of horrible fascination he began to review the collection in detail, to guess its causes in severalty and to philosophize its lamentable consequences.

III.

In this process Ludlow discovered that there was more of the Fine Arts Department than he had supposed at first. He was aware of some women who had come into the next aisle or section, and presently he overheard fragments of their talk.

A girl's voice said passionately: "I don't care! I shan't leave them here for folks to make remarks about! I knew they wouldn't take the premium, and I hope you're satisfied now, mother."

"Well, you're a very silly child," came in an older voice, suggestive of patience and amiability. "Don't tear them, anyway!"

"I shall! I don't care if I tear them all to pieces."

There was a sound of quick steps, and of the angry swirl of skirts, and the crackling and rending of paper.

"There, now!" said the older voice. "You've dropped one."

"I don't care! I hope they'll trample it under their great stupid hoofs."

The paper, whatever it was, came skating out under

the draped tabling in the section where Ludlow stood, arrested in his sad employment by the unseen drama, and lay at his feet. He picked it up, and he had only time to glance at it before he found himself confronted by a fiercely tearful young girl who came round the corner of his section, and suddenly stopped at sight of him. With one hand she pressed some crumpled sheets of paper against her breast; the other she stretched toward Ludlow.

"Oh! will you" — she began, and then she faltered; and as she turned her little head aside for a backward look over her shoulder, she made him, somehow, think of a hollyhock, by the tilt of her tall, slim, young figure, and by the colors of her hat from which her face flowered; no doubt the deep-crimson silk waist she wore, with its petal-edged ruffle flying free down her breast, had something to do with his fantastic notion. She was a brunette, with the lightness and delicacy that commonly go with the beauty of a blonde. She could not have been more than fifteen; her skirts had not yet matured to the full womanly length; she was still a child.

A handsome, mild, middle-aged woman appeared beside the stormy young thing, and said in the voice which Ludlow had already heard, "Well, Cornelia!"

She seemed to make more account than the girl made of the young fellow's looks. He was of the medium height for a man, but he was so slight that he seemed of lower stature, and he eked out an effect of distinction by brushing his little moustache up sharply at the corners in a fashion he had learned in France, and by wearing a little black dot of an imperial. His brow was habitually darkened by a careworn frown, which came from deep and anxious thinking about the principles and the practice of art. He was very well dressed, and he carried himself with a sort of worldly splendor which did not intimidate the lady before him. In the country women have no more apprehension of men who are young and stylish and good-looking than they have in the city; they rather like them to be so, and meet them with confidence in any casual encounter.

The lady said, "Oh, thank you," as Ludlow came up to the girl with the paper, and then she laughed with no particular intention, and said, "It's one of my daughter's drawings."

"Oh, indeed!" said Ludlow, with a quick perception of the mother's pride in it, and of all the potentialities of prompt intimacy. "It's very good."

"Well, *I* think so," said the lady, while the girl darkled and bridled in young helplessness. If she

knew that her mother ought not to be offering a stranger her confidence like that, she did not know what to do about it. "She was just going to take them home," said the mother vaguely.

"I'm sorry," said Ludlow. "I seem to be a day after the fair, as far as they're concerned."

"Well, I don't know," said the mother, with the same amiable vagueness. She had some teeth gone, and when she smiled she tried to hide their absence on the side next Ludlow; but as she was always smiling she did not succeed perfectly. She looked doubtfully at her daughter, in the manner of mothers whom no severity of snubbing can teach that their daughters when well-grown girls can no longer be treated as infants. "I don't know as you'd think you had lost much. We didn't expect they *would* take the premium, a *great* deal."

"I should hope not," said Ludlow. "The competition was bad enough."

The mother seemed to divine a compliment in this indefinite speech. She said: "Well, I don't see myself why they didn't take it."

"There was probably no one to feel how much better they were," said Ludlow.

"Well, that's what *I* think," said the mother, "and

it's what I tell her." She stood looking from Ludlow to her daughter and back, and now she ventured, seeing him so intent on the sketch he still held, "You an artist?"

"A student of art," said Ludlow, with the effect of uncovering himself in a presence.

The mother did not know what to make of it apparently; she said blankly, "Oh!" and then added impressively, to her daughter: "Why don't you show them to him, Cornelia?"

"I should think it a great favor," said Ludlow, intending to be profoundly respectful. But he must have overdone it. The girl majestically gave her drawings to her mother, and marched out of the aisle.

Ludlow ignored her behavior, as if it had nothing to do with the question, and began to look at the drawings, one after another, with various inarticulate notes of comment imitated from a great French master, and with various foreign phrases, such as "*Bon! Bon! Pas mauvais! Joli! Chic!*" He seemed to waken from them to a consciousness of the mother, and returned to English. "They are very interesting. Has she had instruction?"

"Only in the High School, here. And she didn't seem to care any for that. She seems to want to work more by herself."

"That's wrong," said Ludlow, "though she's probably right about the High School."

The mother made bold to ask, "Where are *you* taking lessons?"

"I?" said Ludlow, dreamily. "Oh! everywhere."

"I thought, perhaps," the mother began, and she stopped, and then resumed, "How many lessons do you expect to take?"

IV.

LUDLOW descended from the high horse which he saw it was really useless for him to ride in that simple presence. "I didn't mean that I was a student of art in that sense, exactly. I suppose I'm a painter of some sort. I studied in Paris, and I'm working in New York — if that's what you mean."

"Yes," said the lady, as if she did not know quite what she meant.

Ludlow still remained in possession of the sketches, and he now looked at them with a new knot between his eyebrows. He had known at the first glance, with the perception of one who has done things in any art, that here was the possibility of things in his art, and he had spoken from a generous and compassionate impulse, from his recognition of the possibility, and from his sympathy with the girl in her defeat. Now his conscience began to prick him. He asked himself whether he had any right to encourage her, whether he ought not rather to warn her. He asked her mother: "Has she been doing this sort of thing long?"

"Ever since she was a little bit of a thing," said the mother. "You *might* say she's been doing it ever since she could do anything; and she *ain't* but about fifteen, *now*. Well, she's going on sixteen," the mother added, scrupulously. "She was born the third of July, and now it's the beginning of September. So she's just fifteen years and a little over two months. I suppose she's too young to commence taking lessons regularly?"

"No one would be too young for that," said Ludlow, austerely, with his eyes on the sketch. He lifted them, and bent them frankly and kindly on the mother's face. "And were you thinking of her going on?" The mother questioned him for his exact meaning with the sweet unwisdom of her smile. "Did you think of her becoming an artist, a painter?"

"Well," she returned, "I presume she would have as good a chance as anybody, if she had the talent for it."

"She has the talent for it," said Ludlow, "and she would have a better chance than most — that's very little to say — but it's a terribly rough road."

"Yes," the mother faltered, smiling.

"Yes. It's a hard road for a man, and it's doubly hard for a woman. It means work that breaks the

back and wrings the brain. It means for a woman, tears, and hysterics, and nervous prostration, and insanity — some of them go wild over it. The conditions are bad air, and long hours, and pitiless criticism; and the rewards are slight and uncertain. One out of a hundred comes to anything at all; one out of a thousand to anything worth while. New York is swarming with girl art-students. They mostly live in poor boarding-houses, and some of them actually suffer from hunger and cold. For men the profession is hazardous, arduous; for women it's a slow anguish of endeavor and disappointment. Most shop-girls earn more than most fairly successful art-students for years; most servant-girls fare better. If you are rich, and your daughter wishes to amuse herself by studying art, it's all very well; but even then I wouldn't recommend it as an amusement. If you're poor" —

"I presume," the mother interrupted, "that she would be self-supporting by the time she had taken six months' lessons, and I guess she could get along till then."

Ludlow stared at the amiably smiling creature. From her unruffled composure his warning had apparently fallen like water from the back of a goose. He

saw that it would be idle to go on, and he stopped short and waited for her to speak again.

"If she was to go to New York to take lessons, how do you think she'd better" — She seemed not to know enough of the situation to formulate her question farther. He had pity on her ignorance, though he doubted whether he ought to have.

"Oh, go into the Synthesis," he said briefly.

"The Synthesis?"

"Yes; the Synthesis of Art Studies; it's the only thing. The work is hard, but it's thorough; the training's excellent, if you live through it."

"Oh, I guess she'd live through it," said the mother with a laugh. She added, "I don't know as I know just what you mean by the Synthesis of Art Studies."

"It's a society that the art-students have formed. They have their own building, and casts, and models; the principal artists have classes among them. You submit a sketch, and if you get in you work away till you drop, if you're in earnest, or till you're bored, if you're amusing yourself."

"And should you think," said the mother gesturing toward him with the sketches in her hand, "that she could get in?"

"I think she could," said Ludlow, and he acted

upon a sudden impulse. He took a card from his pocketbook, and gave it to the mother. "If you'll look me up when you come to New York, or let me know, I may be of use to you, and I shall be very glad to put you in the way of getting at the Synthesis."

"Thanks," the mother drawled with her eyes on the card. She probably had no clear sense of the favor done her. She lifted her eyes and smiled on Ludlow with another kind of intelligence. "You're visiting at Mrs. Burton's."

"Yes," said Ludlow, remembering after a moment of surprise how pervasive the fact of a stranger's presence in a village is. "Mr. Burton can tell you who I am," he added in some impatience with her renewed scrutiny of his card.

"Oh, it's all right," she said, and she put it in her pocket, and then she began to drift away a little. "Well, I'm sure I'm much obliged to you." She hesitated a moment, and then she said, "Well, good afternoon."

"Good-by," said Ludlow, and he lifted his hat and stood bowing her out of the Fine Arts Department, while she kept her eyes on him to the last with admiration and approval.

"Well, I declare, Cornelia," she burst out to her daughter, whom she found glowering at the agricultural implements, "that *is* about the nicest fellow! Do you know what he's done?" She stopped and began a search for her pocket, which ended successfully. "He's given me his name, and told me just what you're to do. And when you get to New York, if you ever do, you can go right straight *to* him."

She handed Ludlow's card to the girl, who instantly tore it to pieces without looking at it. "I'll never go to him — horrid, mean, cross old thing! And you go and talk about me to a perfect stranger as if I were a baby. And now he'll go and laugh at you with the Burtons, and they'll say it's just like you to say everything that comes into your head, that way, and think everybody's as nice as they seem. But *he* isn't nice! He's *horrid*, and conceited, and — and — hateful. And I shall *never* study art anywhere. And I'd *die* before I asked *him* to help me. He was just making fun of you all the time, and anybody but you would see it, mother! Comparing me to a hired girl!"

"No, I don't think he did *that*, Cornelia," said the mother with some misgiving. "I presume he may have been a little touched up by your pictures, and wanted to put me down about them" —

"Oh, mother, mother, mother!" The girl broke into tears over the agricultural implements. "They were the dust under his feet."

"Why, Cornelia, how you talk!"

"I wish *you* wouldn't talk, mother! I've asked you a thousand times, if I've asked you once, not to talk about me with anybody, and here you go and tell everything that you can think of to a person that you never saw before."

"What did I tell him about you?" asked her mother, with the uncertainty of ladies who say a great deal.

"You told him how old I was almost to a day!"

"Oh, well, that wasn't anything! I saw he'd got to know if he was to give any opinion about your going on that was worth having."

"It'll be all over town, to-morrow. Well, never mind! It's the last time you'll ever have a chance to do it. I'll never, never, never touch a pencil to draw with again! Never! You've done it *now*, mother! *I* don't care! I'll help you with your work, all you want, but don't ever ask me to draw a single thing after this. I guess he wouldn't have much to say about the style of a bonnet, or set of a dress, if it *was* wrong!"

The girl swept out of the building with tragedy-queen strides that refused to adjust themselves to the lazy, lounging pace of her mother, and carried her homeward so swiftly that she had time to bang the front gate and the front door, and her own room door and lock it, and be crying on the bed with her face in the pillow, long before her mother reached the house. The mother wore a face of unruffled serenity, and as there was no one near to see, she relaxed her vigilance, and smiled with luxurious indifference to the teeth she had lost

V.

LUDLOW found his friend Burton smoking on his porch when he came back from the fair, and watching with half-shut eyes the dust that overhung the street. Some of the farmers were already beginning to drive home, and their wheels sent up the pulverous clouds which the western sun just tinged with red; Burton got the color under the lower boughs of the maple grove of his deep door-yard.

"Well," he called out, in a voice expressive of the temperament which kept him content with his modest fortune and his village circumstance, when he might have made so much more and spent so much more in the world outside, "did you get your picture?"

Ludlow was only half-way up the walk from the street when the question met him, and he waited to reach the piazza steps before he answered.

"Oh, yes, I think I've got it." By this time Mrs. Burton had appeared at the hall door-way, and stood as if to let him decide whether he would come into the house, or join her husband outside. He turned

aside to take a chair near Burton's, tilted against the wall, but he addressed himself to her.

"Mrs. Burton, who is rather a long-strung, easy-going, good-looking, middle-aged lady, with a daughter about fifteen years old, extremely pretty and rather peppery, who draws?"

Mrs. Burton at once came out, and sat sidewise in the hammock, facing the two men.

"How were they dressed?"

Ludlow told as well as he could; he reserved his fancy of the girl's being like a hollyhock.

"Was the daughter pretty?"

"Very pretty."

"Dark?"

"Yes, 'all that's best of dark and bright.'"

"Were they both very graceful?"

"Very graceful indeed."

"Why it must be Mrs. Saunders. Where did you see them?"

"In the Art Department."

"Yes. She came to ask me whether I would exhibit some of Cornelia's drawings, if I were she."

"And you told her you would?" her husband asked, taking his pipe out for the purpose.

"Of course I did. That was what she wished me to tell her."

Burton turned to Ludlow. "Had they taken many premiums?"

"No; the premiums had been bestowed on the crazy quilts and the medley pictures — what extraordinarily idiotic inventions! — and Miss Saunders was tearing down her sketches in the next section. One of them slipped through on the floor, and they came round after it to where I was."

"And so you got acquainted with Mrs. Saunders?" said Mrs. Burton.

"No. But I got intimate," said Ludlow. "I sympathized with her, and she advised with me about her daughter's art-education."

"What did you advise her to do?" asked Burton.

"Not to have her art-educated."

"Why, don't you think she has talent?" Mrs. Burton demanded, with a touch of resentment.

"Oh, yes. She has beauty, too. Nothing is commoner than the talent and beauty of American girls. But they'd better trust to their beauty."

"I don't think so," said Mrs. Burton, with spirit.

"You can see how she's advised Mrs. Saunders," said Burton, winking the eye next Ludlow.

"Well, you mustn't be vexed with me, Mrs. Burton," Ludlow replied to her. "I don't think she'll

take my advice, especially as I put it in the form of warning. I told her how hard the girl would have to work: but I don't think she quite understood. I told her she had talent, too; and she did understand that; there was something uncommon in the child's work; something — different. Who *are* they, Mrs. Burton?"

"*Isn't* there!" cried Mrs. Burton. "I'm glad you told the poor thing that. I thought they'd take the premium. I was going to tell you about her daughter. Mrs. Saunders must have been awfully disappointed."

"She didn't seem to suffer much," Ludlow suggested.

"No," Mrs. Burton admitted, "she doesn't suffer much about anything. If she did she would have been dead long ago. First, her husband blown up by his saw-mill boiler, and then one son killed in a railroad accident, and another taken down with pneumonia almost the same day! And she goes on, smiling in the face of death" —

"And looking out that he doesn't see how many teeth she's lost," Burton prompted.

Ludlow laughed at the accuracy of the touch.

Mrs. Burton retorted, "Why shouldn't she? Her

good looks and her good nature are about all she has left in the world, except this daughter."

"Are they very poor?" asked Ludlow, gently.

"Oh, nobody's *very* poor in Pymantoning" said Mrs. Burton. "And Mrs. Saunders has her business, — when she's a mind to work at it."

"I suppose she has it, even when she hasn't a mind to work at it," said Burton, making his pipe purr with a long, deep inspiration of satisfaction. "I know I have mine."

"What *is* her business?" asked Ludlow.

"Well, she's a dressmaker and milliner — when she *is*." Mrs. Burton stated the fact with the effect of admitting it. "You musn't suppose that makes any difference. In a place like Pymantoning, she's 'as good as anybody,' and her daughter has as high social standing. You can't imagine how Arcadian we are out here."

"Oh, yes, I can; I've lived in a village," said Ludlow.

"A New England village, yes; but the lines are drawn just as hard and fast there as they are in a city. You have to live in the West to understand what equality is, and in a purely American population, like this. You've got plenty of independence, in New

England, but you haven't got equality, and we *have*, — or used to have." Mrs. Burton added the final words with apparent conscience.

"Just saved your distance, Polly," said her husband. "We haven't got equality now, any more than we've got buffalo. I don't believe we ever had buffalo in this section; but we did have deer once; and when I was a boy here, venison was three cents a pound, and equality cheaper yet. When they cut off the woods the venison and the equality disappeared; they always do when the woods are cut off."

"There's enough of it left for all practical purposes, and Mrs. Saunders moves in the first circles of Pymantoning," said Mrs. Burton.

"When she *does* move," said Burton. "She doesn't *like* to move."

"Well, she has the greatest taste, and if you can get her to do anything for you your fortune's made. But it's a favor. She'll take a thing that you've got home from the city, and that you're frantic about, it's so bad, and smile over it a little, and touch it here and there, and it comes out a miracle of style and becomingness. It's like magic."

"She *was* charming," said Ludlow, in dreamy reminiscence.

"*Isn't* she?" Mrs. Burton demanded. "And her daughter gets all her artistic talent from her. Mrs. Saunders *is* an artist, though I don't suppose you like to admit it of a dressmaker."

"Oh, yes, I do," said Ludlow. "I don't see why a man or woman who drapes the human figure in stuffs, isn't an artist as well as the man or woman who drapes it in paint or clay."

"Well, that's sense," Mrs. Burton began.

"She didn't know you had any, Ludlow," her husband explained.

Mrs. Burton did not regard him. "If she had any ambition she would be anything — just like some other lazy-boots" and now she gave the large, dangling congress gaiter of her husband a little push with the point of her slipper, for purposes of identification, as the newspapers say. "But the only ambition she's got is for her daughter, and she *is* proud of her, and she would spoil her if she could get up the energy. She dotes on her, and Nic is fond of her mother, too. Do you think she can ever do anything in art?"

"If she were a boy, I should say yes; as she's a girl, I don't know," said Ludlow. "The chances are against her."

"Nature's against her, too," said Burton.

"*Human* nature ought to be for her, then," said Mrs. Burton. "If she were your sister what should you wish her to be?' she asked Ludlow.

"I should wish her to be" — Ludlow thought a moment and then concluded — "happily married."

"Well, that's a shame!" cried Mrs. Burton.

Her husband laughed, while he knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the edge of his chair-seat. "Rough on the holy estate of matrimony, Polly."

"Oh, pshaw! I believe as much in the holy estate of matrimony as anybody, but I don't believe it's the begin-all or the end-all for a woman, any more than it is for a man. What, Katy?" she spoke to a girl who appeared and disappeared in the doorway. "Oh! Well, come in to supper, now. I hope you have an appetite, Mr. Ludlow. Mr. Burton's such a delicate eater, and I like to have *some*body keep me in countenance." She suddenly put her hand on the back of her husband's chair, and sprung it forward from its incline against the wall, with a violence that bounced him fearfully, and extorted a roar of protest from him.

They were much older than Ludlow, and they permitted themselves the little rowdy freedoms that good-natured married people sometimes use, as fear-

lessly in his presence as if he were a grown-up nephew. They prized him as a discovery of their own, for they had stumbled on him one day before any one else had found him out, when he was sketching at Fontainebleau. They liked the look of his picture, as they viewed it at a decent remove over his shoulder, and after they got by Burton proposed to go back and kill the fellow on account of the solemn coxcombery of his personal appearance. His wife said: "Well, ask him what he'll take for his picture, first," and Burton returned and said with brutal directness, while he pointed at the canvas with his stick, "*Combien?*" When Ludlow looked round up at him and answered with a pleasant light in his eye, "Well, I don't know exactly. What'll you give?" Burton spared his life, and became his friend. He called his wife to him, and they bought the picture, and afterwards they went to Ludlow's lodging, for he had no studio, and conscientiously painted in the open air, and bought others. They got the pictures dog cheap, as Burton said, for Ludlow was just beginning then, and his reputation which has never since become cloud-capt, was a tender and lowly plant. They made themselves like a youngish aunt and uncle to him, and had him with them all they could while they

stayed in Paris. When they came home they brought the first impressionistic pictures ever seen in the West; at Pymantoning, the village cynic asked which was right side up, and whether he was to stand on his head or not to get them in range. Ludlow remained in France, which he maintained had the only sun for impressionism; and then he changed his mind all at once, and under an impulse of sudden patriotism, declared for the American sky, and the thin, crystalline, American air. His faith included American subjects, and when, after his arrival in New York, Burton wrote to claim a visit from him and ironically proposed the trotting-match at the County Fair as an attraction for his pencil, Ludlow remembered the trotting-matches he had seen in his boyhood, and came out to Pymantoning with a seriousness of expectation that alarmed and then amused his friends.

He was very glad that he had come, and that night, after the supper which lasted well into the early autumn lamplight, he went out and walked the village streets under the September moon, seeing his picture everywhere before him, and thinking his young, exultant thoughts. The maples were set so thick along the main street that they stood like a high, dark wall on either side, and he looked up at the sky as from

the bottom of a chasm. The village houses lurked behind their door-yard trees, with breadths of autumnal bloom in the gardens beside them. Within their shadowy porches, or beside their gates, was

> "The delight of happy laughter,
> The delight of low replies,"

hushing itself at his approach, and breaking out again at his retreat. The air seemed full of love, and in the midst of his proud, gay hopes, he felt smitten with sudden isolation, such as youth knows in the presence of others' passion. He walked back to Burton's rather pensively, and got up to his room and went to bed after as little stay for talk with his hosts as he could make decent; he did not like to break with his melancholy.

He was roused from his first sleep by the sound of singing, which seemed to stop with his waking. There came a confused murmur of girls' and young men's voices, and Ludlow could see from his open window the dim shapes of the serenaders in the dark of the trees below. Then they were still, and all at once the silence was filled with a rich contralto note, carrying the song, till the whole choir of voices took up the burden. Nothing prettier could have happened

anywhere in the world. Ludlow hung rapt upon the music till Burton flung up his window, as if to thank the singers. They stopped at the sound, and with gay shouts and shrieks, and a medley of wild laughter, skurried away into the farther darkness, where Ludlow heard them begin their serenade again under distant windows as little localized as any space of the sky.

VI.

LUDLOW went back to New York and took up his work with vigor and with fervor. The picture of the County Fair, which he exhibited at the American Artists', ran a gauntlet of criticism in which it was belabored at once for its unimaginative vulgarity and its fantastic unreality; then it returned to his studio and remained unsold, while the days, weeks, months and years went by and left each their fine trace on him. His purposes dropped away, mostly unfulfilled, as he grew older and wiser, but his dreams remained and he was still rich in a vast future. His impressionism was somewhat modified; he offered his palette less frequently to the public; he now and then permitted a black object to appear in his pictures; his purples and greens were less aggressive. His moustache had grown so thick that it could no longer be brushed up at the points with just the effect he desired, and he suffered it to branch straight across his cheeks; his little dot of an imperial had become lost in the beard which he wore so conscientiously trimmed

to a point that it might be described as religiously pointed. He was now twenty-seven.

At sixteen Cornelia Saunders had her first love-affair. It was with a young man who sold what he called art-goods by sample — satin banners, gilt rolling-pins, brass disks and keramics; he had permitted himself to speak to her on the train coming over from the Junction, where she took the cars for Pymantoning one afternoon after a day's shopping with her mother in Lakeland. It did not last very long, and in fact it hardly survived the brief stay which the young man made in Pymantoning, where his want of success in art-goods was probably owing to the fact that he gave his whole time to Cornelia, or rather Cornelia's mother, whom he found much more conversable; he played upon the banjo for her, and he danced a little clog-dance in her parlor, which was also her shop, to the accompaniment of his own whistling, first setting aside the bonnet-trees with their scanty fruitage of summer hats, and pushing the show-table against the wall. "Won't hurt 'em a mite," he reassured her, and he struck her as a careful as well as accomplished young man. His passion for Cornelia lingered a while in letters, which he proposed in parting, and then, about six months later, Mrs. Saunders received

the newspaper announcement of his marriage to Miss Tweety Byers of Lakeland. There were "No Cards," but Mrs. Saunders made out, with Mrs. Burton's help, that Tweety was the infantile for the pet name of Sweety; and the marriage seemed a fit union for one so warm and true as the young traveller in art-goods.

Mrs. Saunders was a good deal surprised, but she did not suffer keenly from the disappointment which she had innocently done her best to bring upon her daughter. Cornelia, who had been the passive instrument of her romance, did not suffer from it at all, having always objected to the thickness of the young man's hands, and to the early baldness which gave him the Shakespearian brow he had so little use for. She laughed his memory to scorn, and employed the episode as best she could in quelling her mother's simple trust of passing strangers. They worked along together, in the easy, unambitious village fashion, and kept themselves in the average comfort, while the time went by and Cornelia had grown from a long, lean child to a tall and stately young girl, who carried herself with so much native grace and pride that she had very little attention from the village youth. She had not even a girl friendship, and her chief social resource

was in her intimacy at the Burtons. She borrowed books of them, and read a good deal; and when she was seventeen she rubbed up her old studies and got a teacher's certificate for six months, and taught a summer term in a district at Burnt Pastures. She came home in the fall, and when she called at the Burtons' to get a book, as usual, Mrs. Burton said, "Nelie, you're not feeling very well, are you? Somehow you looked fagged."

"Well, I do feel queer," said the girl. "I seem to be in a kind of dream. It — scares me. I'm afraid I'm going to be sick."

"Oh, I guess not," Mrs. Burton answered comfortably. "You're just tired out. How did you like your school?"

"I hated it," said the girl, with a trembling chin and wet eyes. "I don't believe I'm fit for teaching. I won't try it any more; I'll stay at home and help mother."

"You ought to keep up your drawing," said Mrs. Burton in general admonition. "Do you draw any now?"

"Nothing much," said the girl.

"I should think you would, to please your mother. Don't you care anything for it yourself?"

"Yes; but I haven't the courage I had when I thought I knew it all. I don't think I should ever amount to anything. It would be a waste of time."

"I don't think so," said Mrs. Burton. "I believe you could be a great artist."

The girl laughed. "What ever became of that painter who visited you year before last at fair time?"

"Mr. Ludlow? Oh, he's in New York. *He* thought your sketches were splendid, Nelie."

"He said the girls half-killed themselves there studying art."

"Did he?" demanded Mrs. Burton with a note of wrath in her voice.

"Mm. He told mother so that day."

"He had no business to say such a thing before you. Was that what discouraged you?"

"Oh, I don't know. I got discouraged. Of course, I should like to please mother. How much do you suppose it would cost a person to live in New York? I don't mean take a room and board yourself; I shouldn't like to do that; but everything included."

"I don't know, indeed, Nelie. Jim always kept the accounts when we were there, and we stayed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel."

"Do you suppose it would be twice as much as it is here? Five dollars a week?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it would," Mrs. Burton admitted.

"I've got sixty-five dollars from my school. I suppose it would keep me three months in New York, if I was careful. But I'm not going to throw it away on any such wild scheme as that. I know *that* much."

They talked away from the question, and then talked back to it several times, after they had both seemed to abandon it. At last Mrs. Burton said, "Why don't you let me write to Mr. Ludlow, Nelie, and ask him all about it?"

The girl jumped to her feet in a fright. "If you do, Mrs. Burton, I'll kill myself! No, I didn't mean to say that. But I'll never speak to you again. Now you won't really, will you?"

"No, I won't, Nelie, if you don't want me to; but I don't see why — Why, bless the child!"

Mrs. Burton sprang forward and caught the girl, who was reeling as if she were going to fall. "Katy! Katy! Bring some water here, quick!"

When they had laid Cornelia on a sofa and restored her from her faint, Mrs. Burton would not let her try to rise. She sent out to Burton, who was reading a novel in the mild forenoon air under the crimson

maples, and made him get the carryall and take Cornelia home in it. They thought they would pretend that they were out for a drive, and were merely dropping her at her mother's door; but no ruse was necessary. Mrs. Saunders tranquilly faced the fact; she said she thought the child hadn't been herself since she got back from her school, and she guessed she had better have the doctor now.

VII.

It was toward the end of January before Cornelia was well enough to be about in the old way, after her typhoid fever. Once she was so low that the rumor of her death went out; but when this proved false it was known for a good sign, and no woman, at least, was surprised when she began to get well. She was delirious part of the time, and then she raved constantly about Ludlow, and going to New York to study art. It was a mere superficial effect from her talk with Mrs. Burton just before she was taken down with the fever; but it was pathetic, all the same, to hear her pleading with him, quarrelling, protesting that she was strong enough, and that she was not afraid but that she should get through all right if he would only tell her how to begin. "Now you just tell me that, tell me that, tell me that! It's the *place* that I can't find. If I can get to the right door! But it won't open! It won't open! Oh, dear! What *shall* I do!"

Mrs. Burton, who heard this go on through the solemn hours of night, thought that if Ludlow could

only hear it he would be careful how he ever discouraged any human being again. It was as much as her husband could do to keep her from writing to him, and making the girl's fever a matter of personal reproach to him; but she refrained, and when Cornelia got up from it she was so changed that Mrs. Burton was glad she had never tried to involve any one else in her anxieties about her.

Not only the fever had burned itself out, but Cornelia's temperament seemed for awhile to have been consumed in the fire. She came out of it more like her mother. She was gentler than she used to be, and especially gentle and good to her mother; and she had not only grown to resemble her in a greater tranquillity and easy-goingness, but to have come into her ambitions and desires. The change surprised Mrs. Saunders a good deal; up to this time it had always surprised her that Cornelia should not have been at all like her. She sometimes reflected, however, that if you came to that, Cornelia's father had never been at all like her, either.

It was only a passing phase of the girl's evolution. With the return of perfect health and her former strength, she got back her old energetic self, but of another quality and in another form. Probably she

would have grown into the character she now took on in any case; but following her convalescence as it did, it had a more dramatic effect. She began to review her studies and her examination papers before the doctor knew it, and when the county examiners met in June she was ready for them, and got a certificate authorizing her to teach for a year. With this she need not meet the poor occasions of any such forlorn end-of-the-earth as Burnt Pastures. She had an offer of the school at Hartley's Mills, and she taught three terms there, and brought home a hundred and fifty dollars at the end. All through the last winter she drew, more or less, and she could see better than any one else that she had not fallen behind in her art, but after having let it drop for a time, had taken it up with fresh power and greater skill. She had come to see things better than she used, and she had learned to be faithful to what she saw, which is the great matter in all the arts.

She had never formulated this fact, even if she knew it; and Mrs. Burton was still further from guessing what it was that made Cornelia's sketches so much more attractive than they were, when the girl let her look at them, in one of her proud, shy confidences. She said, "I do wish Mr. Ludlow could see these, Nelie."

"Do you think he would be very much excited?" asked the girl, with the sarcastic humor which had risen up in her to be one of the reliefs of her earlier intensity.

"He ought to be," said Mrs. Burton. "You know he *did* admire your drawings, Nelie; even those you had at the fair, that time."

"Did he?" returned the girl, carelessly. "What did he say?"

"Well, he said that if you were a boy there couldn't be any doubt about you."

Cornelia laughed. "That was a pretty safe kind of praise. I'm not likely ever to be a boy." She rose up from where they were sitting together, and went to put her drawings away in her room. When she came back, she said, "It would be fun to show him, some day, that even so low down a creature as a girl could be something."

"I wish you would, Nic," said Mrs. Burton, "I just *wish* you would. Why don't you go to New York, this winter, and study! Why don't you make her, Mrs. Saunders?"

"Who? Me?" said Mrs. Saunders, who sat by, in an indolent abeyance. "Oh! I ain't allowed to open my mouth any more."

"Well," said Cornelia, "don't be so ungrammatical, then, when you do it without being allowed, mother."

Mrs. Saunders laughed in lazy enjoyment. "One thing I know; if I had my way she'd have been in New York studying long ago, instead of fooling away her time out here, school-teaching."

"And where would you have been, mother?"

"Me?" said Mrs. Saunders again, incorrigibly. "Oh, I guess I should have been somewhere!"

"Well, I'll tell you what," Mrs. Burton broke in, "Nic must go, and that's all about it. I know from what Mr. Ludlow said that he believes she could be an artist. She would have to work hard, but I don't call teaching school *play*, exactly."

"Indeed it isn't!" said Mrs. Saunders. "I'd sooner set all day at the machine myself, and dear knows that's trying enough!"

"I'm not afraid of the hard work," said Cornelia.

"What are you afraid of, then?" demanded her mother. "Afraid of failing?"

"No; of succeeding," answered Cornelia, perversely.

"*I* can't make the child out," said Mrs. Saunders, with apparent pleasure in the mystery.

Cornelia went on, at least partially, to explain herself. "I mean, succeeding in the way women seem to succeed. They make me sick!"

"Oh," said her mother, with sarcasm that could not sustain itself even by a smile letting Mrs. Burton into the joke, "going to be a Rosa Bonnhure?"

Cornelia scorned this poor attempt of her mother. "If I can't succeed as men succeed, and be a great painter, and not just a great *woman* painter, I'd rather be excused altogether. Even Rosa Bonheur: I don't believe *her* horses would have been considered so wonderful if a man had done them. I guess that's what Mr. Ludlow meant, and I guess he was right. I guess if a girl wants to turn out an artist she'd better start by being a boy."

"I guess," said Mrs. Burton, with admiring eyes full of her beauty, "that if Mr. Ludlow could see you now, he'd be very sorry to have you a boy!"

Cornelia blushed the splendid red of a brunette. "There it is, Mrs. Burton! That's what's always in everybody's mind about a girl when she wants to do something. It's what a magnificent match she'll make by her painting or singing or acting! And if the poor fool only knew, she needn't draw or sing or act, to do that."

"A person would think you'd been through the wars, Cornelia," said her mother.

"I don't care! It's a shame!"

"It *is* a shame, Nelie," said Mrs. Burton, soothingly; and she added, unguardedly, "and I *told* Mr. Ludlow so, when he spoke about a girl's being happily married, as if there was no other happiness for a girl."

"Oh! *He* thinks that, does he?"

"No, of course, he doesn't. He has a very high ideal of women; but he was just running on, in the usual way. He told afterwards how hard the girl art-students work in New York, and go ahead of the young men, some of them — where they have the strength. The only thing is that so few of them have the strength. That's what he meant."

"What do you think, mother?" asked the girl with an abrupt turn toward her. "Do you think I'd break down?"

"I guess if you didn't break down teaching school, that you hated, you won't break down studying art, when you love it so."

"Well," Cornelia said, with the air of putting an end to the audience, "I guess there's no great hurry about it."

She let her mother follow Mrs. Burton out, recognizing with a smile of scornful intelligence the ladies' wish to have the last word about her to themselves.

VIII.

"I DON'T know as I ever saw her let herself go so far before," said Mrs. Saunders, leaning on the top of the closed gate, and speaking across it to Mrs. Burton on the outside of the fence. "I guess she's thinking about it, pretty seriously. She's got money enough, and more than enough."

"Well," said Mrs. Burton, "I'm going to write to Mr. Ludlow about it, as soon as I get home, and I know I can get him to say something that'll decide her."

"So do!" cried Mrs. Saunders, delighted.

She lingered awhile talking of other things, so as to enable herself to meet Cornelia with due unconsciousness when she returned to her.

"Have you been talking me over all this time, mother?" the girl asked.

"We didn't hardly say a word about you," said her mother, and now she saw what a good thing it was that she had staid and talked impersonalities with Mrs. Burton.

"Well, one thing I know," said the girl, "if she gets that Mr. Ludlow to encourage me, I'll never go near New York in the world."

Mrs. Saunders escaped into the next room, and answered back from that safe distance, "I guess you'd better get *her* to tell you what she's going to do."

When she returned, the girl stood looking dreamily out of the little crooked panes of the low window. She asked, with her back to her mother, "What would *you* do, if I went?"

"Oh, I should get along," said Mrs. Saunders with the lazy piety which had never yet found Providence to fail it. "I should get Miss Snively to go in with me, here. She ain't making out very well, alone, and she could be company to me in more ways than one."

"Yes," said the girl, in a deep sigh. "I thought of her." She faced about.

"Why, land, child!" cried her mother, "what's the matter?"

Cornelia's eyes were streaming with tears, and the passion in her heart was twisting her face with its anguish. She flung her arms round her mother's neck, and sobbed on her breast. "Oh, I'm going, I'm going, and you don't seem to care whether I go or stay, and it'll *kill* me to leave you."

Mrs. Saunders smiled across the tempest of grief in her embrace, at her own tranquil image in the glass, and took it into the joke. "Well, you ain't going to leave this minute," she said, smoothing the girl's black hair. "And I don't really care if you never go, Nic. You mustn't go on my account."

"Don't you want me to?"

"Not unless you do."

"And you don't care whether I'm ever an artist or not?"

"What good is your being an artist going to do *me?*" asked her mother, still with a joking eye on herself in the mirror.

"And I'm perfectly free to go or to stay, as far as your wish is concerned?"

"Well!" said Mrs. Saunders, with insincere scorn of the question.

The girl gave her a fierce hug; she straightened herself up, and dashed the water from her eyes. "Well, then," she said, "I'll see. But promise me one thing, mother."

"What is it?"

"That you won't ask me a single thing about it, from this out, if I *never* decide!"

"Well, I won't, Nic. I promise you that. *I* don't

want to drive you to anything. And I guess you know ten times as well what you want to do, as I do, anyway. I ain't going to worry you."

Three weeks later, just before fair time, Cornelia went to see Mrs. Burton. It was warm, and Mrs. Burton brought out a fan for her on the piazza.

"Oh, I'm not hot," said Cornelia. "Mrs. Burton, I've made up my mind to go to New York this winter, and study art."

"I *knew* you would, Nic!" Mrs. Burton exulted.

"Yes. I've thought it all out. I've got the money, now. I keep wanting to paint, and I don't know whether I can or not, and the only way is to go and find out. It'll be easy enough to come home. I'll keep money enough to pay my way back."

"Yes," said Mrs. Burton, "it's the only way. But I guess you'll find out you can paint fast enough. It's a pretty good sign you can, if you want to."

"Oh, I don't know. Some girls want to write poetry awfully, and can't. Mrs. Burton," she broke off, with a nervous laugh, "I don't suppose you expect that Mr. Ludlow out to the fair this year?"

"No, Nelie, I don't," said Mrs. Burton, with tender reluctance.

"Because," said the girl with another laugh, "he

might save me a trip to New York, if he could see my drawings." Something, she did not know what, in Mrs. Burton's manner, made her ask: "Have you heard from him lately? Perhaps *he's* given it up, too!"

"Oh, no!" sighed Mrs. Burton, with a break from her cheerfulness with Cornelia, which set its voluntary character in evidence to the girl's keen, young perception. "But he seemed to be rather discouraged about the prospects of artists when he wrote." She was afraid Cornelia might ask her when he had written. "He seemed to think the ranks were very full. He's a very changeable person. He's always talked, before now, about there being plenty of room at the top."

"Well, that's where I expect to be," said the girl, smiling but trembling. She turned the talk, and soon rose to go, ignoring to the last Mrs. Burton's forced efforts to recur to her plan of studying art in New York. Now she said: "Mrs. Burton, there's one thing I'd like to ask you," and she lifted her eyes upon her with a suddenness that almost made Mrs. Burton jump.

"What is it, Nelie?"

"You've always been so good to me — and — and

taken such an interest, that I'm afraid — I thought you might try — I want you to promise me you won't write to Mr. Ludlow about me, or ask him to do the least thing, for me!"

"I won't, I won't indeed, Nelie!" Mrs. Burton promised with grateful perfervor.

"Because," said the girl, taking her skirt in her left hand, preparatory to lifting it for her descent of the piazza steps, "now that I've made up my mind, I don't want to be discouraged, and I don't want to be helped. If I can't do for myself, I won't be done *for*."

After she got down through the maples, and well out of the gate, Burton came and stood in the hall door-way, with his pipe in his mouth. "Saved your distance, Polly, as usual; saved your distance."

"What would *you* have done?" retorted his wife.

"I should have told her that I'd just got a letter from Ludlow this morning, and that he begged and entreated me by everything I held dear, to keep the poor girl from coming to New York, and throwing away her time and health and money."

"You wouldn't!" cried Mrs. Burton. "You wouldn't have done anything of the kind. It would have made her perfectly hate him."

Burton found his pipe out. He lighted a match and hollowed his hands over it above the pipe, to keep it from the draught. "Well," he said, avoiding the point in controversy, "why *shouldn't* she perfectly hate him?"

IX.

SEPTEMBER was theoretically always a very busy month with Mrs. Saunders. She believed that she devoted it to activities which she called her fall work, and that she pressed forward in the fulfilments of these duties with a vigor inspired by the cool, clear weather. But in reality there was not much less folding of the hands with her in September than there was in July. She was apt, on the coolest and clearest September day, to drop into a chair with a deep drawn "*Oh*, hum!" after the fatigue of bringing in an apronful of apples, or driving the hens away from her chrysanthemums, and she spent a good deal of time wondering how, with all she had to do, she was ever going to get those flowers in before the frost caught them. At one of these times, sitting up slim, graceful and picturesque, in the feather-cushioned rocker-lounge, and fanning her comely face with her shade-hat, it occurred to her to say to Cornelia, sewing hard beside the window, "I guess you won't see them in blossom *this* Christmas, Nic."

"Not unless you cut them at the roots and send them to me by mail to look at," said the girl.

Her mother laughed easily. "Well, I must really take hold and help you, or you'll *never* get away. I've put off everybody else's work, till its perfectly scandalous, and I'm afraid they'll bring the roof about my ears, and yet I seem to be letting you do all your sewing. Well, one thing, I presume I hate to have you go so!"

"Mother!" cried the girl, drawing out her needle to the full length of her thread before she let her hand drop nervelessly at her side, and she fell back to look fixedly at Mrs. Saunders. "If *that's* the way you feel!"

"I don't! I want you to go just as much as ever I did. But looking at you there, just against the window, that way, I got to thinking you wouldn't be there a great while; and" — Mrs. Saunders caught her breath, and was mute a moment before she gave way and began to whimper. From the force of habit she tried to whimper with one side of her mouth, as she smiled, to keep her missing teeth from showing; and at the sight of this characteristic effort, so familiar and so full of long association, Cornelia's heart melted within her, and she ran to her mother, and pulled her

head down on her breast and covered the unwhimpering cheek with kisses.

"Don't you suppose I think of that, too, mother? And when you go round the room, or out in the yard, I just keep following you as if I was magnetized, and I can see you with my eyes shut as well as I can with them open; and I *know* how I shall feel when that's all I've got of you! But I'll soon be back! Why I'll be here in June again! And its no use, *now*. I've *got* to go."

"Oh, yes," said her mother, pushing herself free, and entering upon so prolonged a search for her handkerchief that her tears had almost time to dry without it before she found it. "But that don't make it any easier, child."

They had agreed from the time Cornelia made up her mind to go, and they had vowed the Burtons to secrecy, that they were not to tell any one till just before she started; but it was not in Mrs. Saunders's nature or the nature of things, that she should keep her part of the agreement. She was so proud of Cornelia's going to study art in New York, and going on her own money, that she would have told all her customers that she was going, even if it had not proved such a good excuse for postponing and delaying the work they brought her.

It was all over town before the first week was out, and the fact had been canvassed in and out of the presence of the principals, with much the same frankness. What Cornelia had in excess of a putting-down pride her mother correspondingly lacked; what the girl forbade, Mrs. Saunders invited by her manner, and there were not many people, or at least many ladies, in Pymantoning, who could not put their hands on their hearts and truly declare that they had spoken their minds as freely to Mrs. Saunders as they had to anybody.

As the time drew near Mrs. Burton begged to be allowed to ask Mr. Ludlow about a boarding-place for Cornelia; and to this Cornelia consented on condition that he should be strictly prohibited from taking any more trouble than simply writing the address on a piece of paper. When Mrs. Burton brought it she confessed that Mr. Ludlow seemed to have so far exceeded his instructions as to have inquired the price of board in a single room.

"I'm afraid, Nelie, it's more than you expected. But everything *is* very dear in New York, and Mr. Ludlow thought it was cheap. There's no fire in the room, even at that, but if you leave the door open when you're out, it heats nicely from the hall. It's

over the door, four flights up; it's what they call a side room."

"How much is it, Mrs. Burton?" Cornelia asked, steadily; but she held her breath till the answer came.

"It's seven dollars a week."

"Well, the land!" said Mrs. Saunders, for all comment on the extortionate figure.

For a moment Cornelia did not say anything. Then she quietly remarked, "I can be home all the sooner," and she took the paper which Ludlow had written the address on; she noticed that it smelt of tobacco smoke.

"He said you could easily find your way from the Grand Central Depot by the street cars; it's almost straight. He's written down on the back which cars you take. You give your check to the baggage expressman that comes aboard the train before you get in, and then you don't have the least trouble. He says there are several girl art-students in the same house, and you'll soon feel at home. He says if you feel the least timid about getting in alone, he'll come with a lady friend of his, to meet you, and she'll take you to your boarding-house."

Mrs. Burton escaped with rather more than her life from the transmission of this offer. Cornelia even

said, "I'm very much obliged to him, I'm sure. But I shouldn't wish to trouble him, thank you. I won't feel the least timid."

But her mother followed Mrs. Burton out to the gate, as usual. "I guess," Mrs. Saunders explained, "she hated to have him make so much to-do about it. What makes him want to bring a lady friend to meet her? Somebody he's engaged to?"

"Well, that's what I wondered, at first," said Mrs. Burton. "But then when I came to think how very different the customs are in New York, I came to the conclusion that he did it on Cornelia's account. If he was to take her to the boarding-house himself, they might think he was engaged to *her*."

"Well!" said Mrs. Saunders.

"You may be sure it's because he's good and thoughtful about it, and wants her not to have any embarrassment."

"Oh, I guess he's all right," said Mrs. Saunders. "But who'd ever have thought of having to take such precautions? I shouldn't think life was worth having on such terms, if *I* was a girl."

She told Cornelia about this strange social ceremony of chaperonage, which now for the first time practically concerned them.

X.

THE night began to fall an hour before Cornelia's train reached New York, and it drew into the station, through the whirl and dance of parti-colored lights everywhere.

The black porter of the sleeping-car caught up her bag and carried it out for her, as if he were going to carry it indefinitely; and outside she stood letting him hold it, while she looked about her, scared and bewildered, and the passengers hurrying by, pushed and bumped against her. When she collected her wits sufficiently to take it from him, she pressed on with the rest up toward the front of the station where the crowd frayed out in different directions. At the open doorway giving on the street she stopped, and stood holding her bag, and gazed fearfully out on a line of wild men on the curbstone; they all seemed to be stretching their hands out to her, and they rattled and clamored: "Keb? A keb, a keb, a keb? Want a keb? Keb here! Keb? A keb, a keb, a keb!" They were kept back by a policeman who prevented

them from falling upon the passengers, and restored them to order when they yielded by the half-dozen to the fancy that some one had ordered a cab, and started off in the direction of their vehicles, and then rushed back so as not to lose other chances. The sight of Cornelia standing bag in hand there, seemed to drive them to a frenzy of hope; several newsboys, eager to share their prosperity, rushed up and offered her the evening papers.

Cornelia strained forward from the doorway and tried to make out, in the kaleidoscopic pattern of lights, which was the Fourth Avenue car; the street was full of cars and carts and carriages, all going every which way, with a din of bells, and wheels and hoofs that was as if crushed to one clangerous mass by the superior uproar of the railroad trains coming and going on a sort of street-roof overhead. A sickening odor came from the mud of the gutters and the horses and people, and as if a wave of repulsion had struck against every sense in her, the girl turned and fled from the sight and sound and smell of it all into the ladies' waiting-room at her right.

She knew about that room from Mrs. Burton, who had said she could go in there, and fix her hair if it had got tumbled, when she came off the train. But it

had been so easy to keep everything just right in the nice dressing-room on the sleeper that she had expected to step out of the station and take a Fourth Avenue car without going into the ladies-room. She found herself the only person in it, except a comfortable, friendly-looking, middle-aged woman, who seemed to be in charge of the place, and was going about with a dust-cloth in her hand. She had such a home-like air, and it was so peaceful there, after all that uproar outside, that Cornelia could hardly keep back the tears, though she knew it was silly, and kept saying so to herself under her breath.

She put her hand-bag down, and went and stood at one of the windows, trying to make up her mind to venture out; and then she began to move back and forth from one window to the other. It must have been this effect of restlessness and anxiety that made the janitress speak to her at last: "Expecting friends to meet you?"

Cornelia turned round and took a good look at the janitress. She decided from her official as well as her personal appearance that she might be trusted, as least provisionally. It had been going through her mind there at the windows what a fool she was to refuse to let Mr. Ludlow come to meet her with that friend of

his, and she had been helplessly feigning that she had not refused, and that he was really coming, but was a little late. She was in the act of accepting his apology for the delay when the janitress spoke to her, and she said: "I don't know whether I'd better wait any longer. I was looking for a Fourth Avenue car."

"Well, you couldn't hardly miss one," said the janitress. "They're going all the time. Stranger in the city?"

"Yes, I am," Cornelia admitted; she thought she had better admit it.

"Well," said the janitress, "if I was you I'd wait for my friends a while longer. It's after dark, now, and if they come here and find you gone, they'll be uneasy, won't they?"

"Well," said Cornelia, and she sank submissively into a seat.

The janitress sat down too. "Not but what it's safe enough, and you needn't be troubled, if they don't come. You can go half an hour later just as well. My! I've had people sit here all day and wait. The things I've seen here, well, if they were put into a story you couldn't hardly believe them. I had a poor woman come in here one morning last week with a baby in her arms, and three little children

hanging round her, to wait for her husband; and she waited till midnight, and he didn't come. I could have told her first as well as last that he wasn't ever coming; I knew it from the kind of a letter he wrote her, and that she fished up out of her pocket to show me, so as to find whether she had come to the right place to wait, or not, but I couldn't bear to do it; and I did for her and the children as well as I could, and when it came to it, about twelve, I coaxed her to go home, and come again in the morning. She didn't come back again; I guess she began to suspect something herself."

"Why, don't you suppose he ever meant to come?" Cornelia asked, tremulously.

"*I* don't know," said the janitress. "I didn't tell *her* so. I've had all kinds of homeless folks come in here, that had lost their pocket-books, or never had any, and little tots of children, with papers pinned on to tell me who they were expecting, and I've had 'em here on my hands till I had to shut up at night."

"And what did you do then?" Cornelia began to be anxious about her own fate, in case she should not get away before the janitress had to shut up.

"Well, some I had to put into the street, them that were used to it; and then there are homes of all

kinds for most of 'em; old ladies' homes, and young girls' homes, and destitute females' homes, and children's homes, where they can go for the night, and all I've got to do is to give an order. It isn't as bad as you'd think, when you first come to the city; I came here from Connecticut."

Cornelia thought she might respond so far as to say, "I'm from Ohio," and the janitress seemed to appreciate the confidence.

She said, "Not on your way to the White House, I suppose? There *are* so many Presidents from your State. Well, I knew you were not from near New York, anywhere. I *do* have so many different sorts of folks coming in here, and I have to get acquainted with so many of 'em whether or no. Lots of foreigners, for one thing, and men blundering in, as well as women. They think it's a ticket-office, and want to buy tickets of me, and I have to direct 'em where. It's surprising how bright they are, oftentimes. The Irish are the hardest to get pointed right; the Italians are quick; and the Chinese! My, they're the brightest of all. If a Chinaman comes in for a ticket up the Harlem road, all I've got to do is to set my hand so, and *so!*" She faced south and set her hand westward; then she faced west, and set her hand

northward. "They understand in a minute, and they're off like a flash."

As if she had done now all that sympathy demanded for Cornelia, the janitress went about some work in another part of the room and left the girl to herself. But Cornelia knew that she was keeping a friendly eye on her, and in the shelter of her presence, she tried to gather courage to make that start into the street alone, which she must finally make and which she was so foolish to keep postponing. She had written to the landlady of her boarding-house that she should arrive on such a day, at such an hour; and here was the day, and she was letting the hour go by, and very likely the landlady would give her room to some one else. Or, if the expressman who took her check on the train, should get there with her trunk first, the landlady might refuse to take it. Cornelia did not know how people acted about such things in New York. She ought to go, and she tried to rise; but she was morally so unable that it was as if she were physically unable.

People came and went; some of them more than once, and Cornelia began to feel that they noticed her and recognized her, but still she could not move. Suddenly a figure appeared at the door, the sight of

which armed her with the power of flight. She knew that it was Ludlow, from the photograph he had lately sent Mrs. Burton, with the pointed beard and the branching moustache which he had grown since they met last, and she jumped up to rush past him where he stood peering sharply round at the different faces in the room, and finally letting his eyes rest in eager question on hers.

He came towards her, and then it was too late to escape. "Miss Saunders? *Oh*, I'm so glad! I've been out of town, and I've only just got Mrs. Burton's telegram. Have I kept you waiting long?"

"Not very," said Cornelia. She might have said that he had not kept her waiting at all; the time that she had waited, without being kept by him, was now like no time at all; but she could not say anything more, and she wished to cry, she felt so glad and safe in his keeping. He caught up her bag, and she followed him out, with a blush over her shoulder for the janitress, who smiled after her with mistaken knowingness. But this was at least her self-delusion, and Cornelia had an instant in the confusion when it seemed as if Ludlow's coming had somehow annulled the tacit deceit she had practised in letting the janitress suppose she expected some one.

Ludlow kept talking to her all the way in the horse-car, but she could find only the briefest and dryest answers to his friendly questions about her mother and the Burtons; and all Pymantoning; and she could not blame him for taking such a hasty leave of her at her boarding-house that he almost flew down the steps before the door closed upon her.

She knew that she had disgusted him; and she hinted at this in the letter of scolding gratitude which she wrote to Mrs. Burton before she slept, for the trick she had played her. After all, though, she reasoned, she need not be so much troubled: he had done it for Mrs. Burton, and not for her, and he had not thought it worth while to bring a chaperon. To be sure, he had no time for that; but there was something in it all which put Cornelia back to the mere child she was when they first met in the Fair House at Pymantoning; she kept seeing herself angry and ill-mannered and cross to her mother, and it was as if he saw her so, too. She resented that, for she knew that she was another person now, and she tingled with vexation that she had done nothing to make him realize it.

XI.

LUDLOW caught a cab in the street, and drove furiously to his lodging, where he dressed in ten minutes, so that he was not more than fifteen minutes late at the dinner he had risked missing for Cornelia's sake.

"I'm afraid I'm very late," he said, from his place at the left of his hostess; he pulled his napkin across his lap, and began to attack his oysters at once.

"Oh, not at all," said the lady, but he knew that she would have said much the same if he had come as they were rising from table.

A clear, gay voice rose from the corner of the board diagonally opposite: "The candles haven't begun to burn their shades yet; so you are still early, Mr. Ludlow."

The others laughed with the joy people feel in having a familiar fact noted for the first time. They had all seen candle-shades weakly topple down on the flames and take fire at dinner.

The gay voice went on, rendered, perhaps, a little over-bold by success: "If you see the men rising to

put them out, you may be sure that they've been seated exactly an hour."

Ludlow looked across the bed of roses which filled two-thirds of the table, across the glitter of glass, and the waver of light and shadow, and said, "Oh, *you're* there!"

The wit that had inspired the voice before gave out; the owner tried to make a pout do duty for it. "Of course I'm there," she said; then pending another inspiration she was silent. Everybody waited for her to rise again to the level of her reputation for clever things, and the general expectation expressed itself in a subdued creaking of stiff linen above the board, and the low murmur of silken skirts under the table.

Finally one of the men said, "Well, it's bad enough to come late, but it's a good deal worse to come too early. I'd rather come late, any time."

"Mr. Wetmore wants you to ask him why, Mrs. Westley," said Ludlow.

Mrs. Westley entreated, "Oh, why, Mr. Wetmore?" and every one laughed.

"All right, Ludlow," said the gentleman in friendly menace. Then he answered Mrs. Westley: "Well, one thing, your hostess respects you more. If you come too early you bring reproach and you meet con-

tempt; reproach that she shouldn't have been ready to receive you, and contempt that you should have supposed her capable of dining at the hour fixed."

It was a Mrs. Rangeley who had launched the first shaft at Ludlow; she now fitted another little arrow to her string, under cover of the laugh that followed Mr. Wetmore's reasons. "I shouldn't object to any one's coming late, unless I were giving the dinner; but what I can't bear is wondering what it was kept them."

Again she had given a touch that reminded the company of their common humanity and their unity of emotion, and the laugh that responded was without any of that reservation or uncertainty which a subtle observer may often detect in the enjoyment of brilliant things said at dinner. But the great charm of the Westley dinners was that people generally did understand each other there. If you made a joke, as Wetmore said, you were not often required to spell it. He celebrated the Westleys as ideal hosts: Mrs. Westley had the youth and beauty befitting a second wife; her social ambition had as yet not developed into the passion for millionnaires; she was simply content with painters, like himself and Ludlow, literary men, lawyers, doctors and their several wives.

General Westley was in what Wetmore called the bloom of age. He might be depended upon for the unexpected, like fate. He occasionally did it, he occasionally said it, from the passive hospitality that characterized him.

"I believe I share that impatience of yours, Mrs. Rangeley," he now remarked; "though in the present case I think we ought to leave everything to Mr. Ludlow's conscience."

"Oh, do you think that would be quite safe?" she asked with burlesque seriousness. "Well! If we *must!*"

Ludlow said, "Why, I think Mrs. Rangeley is right. I would much rather yield to compulsion. I don't mind telling what kept me, if I'm obliged to."

"Oh, I almost hate to have you, now!" Mrs. Rangeley bubbled back. "Your willingness, somehow, makes it awful. You may be going to boast of it!"

"No, no!" Wetmore interposed. "I don't believe it's anything to boast of."

"Now, you see, you *must* speak," said Mrs. Westley.

Ludlow fell back in his chair, and dreamily crumbled his bread. "I don't see how I can, exactly."

Wetmore leaned forward and looked at Ludlow round the snowy shoulder of a tall lady next him.

"Is there any particular form of words in which you like to be prompted, when you get to this point?"

"Dr. Brayton might hypnotize him," suggested the lady whose shoulder Wetmore was looking round.

The doctor answered across the table, "In these cases of the inverted or prostrated will, there is often not volition enough to coöperate with the hypnotizer. I don't believe I could do anything with Mr. Ludlow."

"How much," sighed Mrs. Rangeley, "I should like to be the centre of universal interest like that!"

"It's a good pose," said Wetmore; "but really I think Ludlow is working it too hard. I don't approve of mob violence, as the papers say when they're going to; but if he keeps this up much longer I won't be answerable for the consequences. I feel that we are getting beyond the control of our leaders."

Ludlow was tempted to exploit the little incident with Cornelia, for he felt sure that it would win the dinner-table success which we all like to achieve. Her coming to study art in New York, and her arriving in that way, was a pretty romance; prettier than it would have been if she were plainer, and he knew that he

could give the whole situation so that she should appear charming, and should appeal to everybody's sympathy. If he could show her stiff and blunt, as she was, so much the better. He would go back to their first meeting, and bring in a sketch of Pymantoning County Fair, and of the village itself and its social conditions, with studies of Burton and his wife. Every point would tell, for though his commensals were now all well-to-do New Yorkers, he knew that the time had been with them when they lived closer to the ground, in simple country towns, as most prosperous and eminent Americans have done.

"Well," said Wetmore, "how long are you going to make us wait?"

"Oh, you mustn't wait for *me*," said Ludlow. "Once is enough to-night. I'm not going to say what kept me."

This also was a success in its way. It drew cries of protest and reproach from the ladies, and laughter from the men. Wetmore made himself heard above the rest. "Mrs. Westley, I know this man, and I can't let you be made the victim of one of his shameless fakes. There was really nothing kept him. He either forgot the time, or, what is more probable, he deliberately put off coming so as to give himself a

little momentary importance by arriving late. I don't wish to be hard upon him, but that is the truth."

"No, no," said the hostess in the applause which recognized Wetmore's mischievous intent. "I'll not believe anything of the kind." From her this had the effect of repartee, and when she asked with the single-heartedness which Wetmore had praised among her friends as her strongest point, and advised her keeping up as long as she possibly could, "It isn't so, is it, Mr. Ludlow?" the finest wit could not have done more for her. The general beamed upon her over the length of the table. Mrs. Rangeley said at his elbow, "She's always more charming than any one else, simply because she *is*," and he made no effort to turn the compliment upon her as she thought he might very well have done.

Under cover of what the others now began saying about different matters, Ludlow murmured to Mrs. Westley, "I don't mind telling *you*. You know that young girl you said you would go with me to meet when I should ask you?"

"The little school-mistress?"

"Yes." Ludlow smiled. "She isn't so very little, any more. It was she who kept me. I found a dispatch at my place when I got home to-day, telling

me she was coming, and would arrive at six, and there was no time to trouble you; it was half-past when I got it."

"She's actually come then?" asked Mrs. Westlay. "Nothing you could say would stop her?"

"No," said Ludlow with a shrug. He added, after a moment, "But I don't know that I blame her. Nothing would have stopped *me*."

"And is there anything else I can do? Has she a pleasant place to stay?"

"Good enough, I fancy. It's a boarding-house where several people I know have been. She must be left to her own devices, now. That's the best thing for her. It's the only thing."

XII.

In spite of his theory as to what was best for her, in some ways Ludlow rather expected that Cornelia would apply to him for advice as to how and where she should begin work. He forgot how fully he had already given it; but she had not. She remembered what she had overheard him say to her mother, that day in the Fair House, about the superiority of the Synthesis of Studies, and she had since confirmed her faith in his judgment by much silent inquiry of the newspapers. They had the Sunday edition of the *Lakeland Light* at Pymantoning, and Cornelia had kept herself informed of the "Gossip of the Ateliers," and concerning "Women and Artists," "Artists' Summer Homes," "Phases of Studio Life," "The Ladies who are Organizing Ceramic Clubs," "Women Art Students," "Glimpses of the Dens of New York Women Artists," and other æsthetic interests which the Sunday edition of the *Light* purveyed with the newspaper syndicate's generous and indiscriminate abundance. She did not believe it all; much of it

seemed to her very silly; but she nourished her ambition upon it all the same.

The lady writers who celebrated the lady artists, and who mostly preferred to swim in seas of personal float, did now and then offer their readers a basis of solid fact; and they all agreed that the Synthesis of Art Studies was the place for a girl if she was in earnest and wished to work.

As these ladies described them the conditions were of the exacting sort which Cornelia's nature craved, and she had her sex-pride in the Synthesis, too, because she had read that women had borne an important part in founding it; the strictest technical training and the freest spirit of artistic endeavor prevailed in a school that owed its existence so largely to them. That was a great point, even if every one of the instructors was a man. She supposed that Mr. Ludlow would have sheltered himself behind this fact if she had used the other to justify herself in going on with art after he had urged that as a woman, she had better not do so. But the last thing Cornelia intended was to justify herself to Mr. Ludlow, and she vehemently wished he would not try to do anything more for her, now. After sleeping upon the facts of their meeting she felt sure that he would not try. She approved of herself

for not having asked him to call in parting. She was almost glad that he hardly had given her a chance to do so.

It was Saturday night when Cornelia arrived, and she spent Sunday writing home a full account of her adventures to her mother, whom she asked to give Mrs. Burton the note she enclosed, and in looking over her drawings, and trying to decide which she should take to the Synthesis with her. She had a good deal of tacit argument about them with Mr. Ludlow, who persisted in her thoughts after several definitive dismissals; and Monday morning she presented herself with some drawings she had chosen as less ridiculous than some of the others, and hovered with a haughty humility at the door of the little office till the janitor asked her if she would not come in and sit down. He had apparently had official experience of cases like hers; he refused without surprise the drawings which she offered him as her credentials, and said the secretary would be in directly. He did not go so far as to declare his own quality, but he hospitably did what he could to make her feel at home.

Numbers of young people began to appear, singly and in twos and threes, and then go out again, and go on up the stairs which led crookedly to and from the

corner the office was cramped into. Some of them went up stairs after merely glancing into the office, others found letters there, and staid chatting awhile. They looked at Cornelia with merely an identifying eye, at first, as if they perceived that she was a new girl, but as if new girls were such an old story that they could not linger long over one girl of the kind. Certain of the young ladies after they went up stairs came down in long, dismal calico aprons that covered them to the throat, and with an air of being so much absorbed in their work that they did not know what they had on. They looked at Cornelia again, those who had seen her before, and those who had not, made up for it by looking at her twice, and Cornelia began to wonder if there was anything peculiar about her, as she sat upright, stiffening with resentment and faintly flushing under their scrutiny. She wore her best dress, which was a street dress, as the best dress of a village girl usually is; her mother had fitted it, and they had made it themselves, and agreed that it was very becoming; Mrs. Burton had said so, too. The fashion of her hat she was not so sure about, but it was a pretty hat, and unless she had get it on skewy, and she did not believe she had, there was nothing about it to make people stare so. There was one of

these girls, whom Cornelia felt to be as tall as herself, and of much her figure; she was as dark as Cornelia, but of a different darkness. Instead of the red that always lurked under the dusk in Cornelia's cheeks, and that now burned richly through it, her face was of one olive pallor, except her crimson lips; her long eyes were black, with level brows, and with a heavy fringe of lucent black hair cut straight above them; her nose was straight, at first glance, but showed a slight arch in profile; her mouth was a little too full, and her chin slightly retreated. She came in late, and stopped at the door of the office, and bent upon Cornelia a look at once prehistoric and *fin de siècle*, which lighted up with astonishment, interest and sympathy, successively; then she went trailing herself on up stairs with her strange Sphinx-face over her shoulder, and turned upon Cornelia as long as she could see her.

At last a gentleman came in and sat down behind the table in the corner, and Cornelia found a hoarse voice to ask him if he was the secretary. He answered in the friendly way that she afterwards found went all through the Synthesis, that he was, and she said, with her country bluntness, that she wished to study at the Synthesis, and she had brought some of her drawings with her, if he wanted to look at

them. He took them, but either he did not want to look at them, or else it was not his affair to do so. He said she would have to fill out a form, and he gave her a blank which asked her in print a number of questions she had not thought of asking herself till then. It obliged her to confess that she had never studied under any one before, and to say which master in the Synthesis she would like to study under, now. She had to choose between life, and still-life, and the antique, and she chose the antique. She was not governed by any knowledge or desire in her choice more definite than such as come from her having read somewhere that the instructor in the antique was the severest of all the Synthesis instructors, and the most dreaded in his criticisms by the students. She did not forget, even in the presence of the secretary, and with that bewildering blank before her, that she wished to be treated with severity, and that the criticism she needed was the criticism that every one dreaded.

When the secretary fastened her application to her drawings, she asked if she should wait to learn whether it was accepted or not; but he said that he would send her application to the Members' Room, and the instructor would see it there in the morning. She would have liked to ask him if she should come back

there to find out, but she was afraid to do it; he might say no, and then she should not know what to do. She determined to come without his leave, and the next morning she found that the master whom they had been submitted to had so far approved her drawings as to have scrawled upon her application, "Recommended to the Preparatory." The secretary said the instructor in the Preparatory would tell her which grade to enter there.

Cornelia's heart danced, but she governed herself outwardly, and asked through her set teeth, "Can I begin at once?" She had lost one day already, and she was not going to lose another if she could help it.

The secretary smiled. "If the instructor in the Preparatory will place you."

Before noon she had passed the criticism needed for this, and was in the lowest grade of the Preparatory. But she was a student at the Synthesis, and she was there to work in the way that those who knew best bade her. She wished to endure hardness, and the more hardness the better.

XIII.

CORNELIA found herself in the last of a long line of sections or stalls which flanked a narrow corridor dividing the girl students from the young men, who were often indeed hardly more than boys. There was a table stretching from this corridor to a window looking down on the roofs of some carpenter shops and stables; on the board before her lay the elementary shape of a hand in plaster, which she was trying to draw. At her side that odd-looking girl, who had stared so at her on the stairs the day before, was working at a block foot, and not getting it very well. She had in fact given it up for the present and was watching Cornelia's work and watching her face, and talking to her.

"What is your name?" she broke off to ask, in the midst of a monologue upon the social customs and characteristics of the Synthesis.

Cornelia always frowned, and drew her breath in long sibillations, when she was trying hard to get a thing right. She now turned a knotted forehead

on her companion, but stopped her hissing to ask, "What?" Then she came to herself and said, "Oh! Saunders."

"I don't mean your last name," said the other, "I mean your first name."

"Cornelia," said the owner of it, as briefly as before.

"I should have thought it would have been Gladys," the other suggested.

Cornelia looked up in astonishment and some resentment. "Why in the world should my name be Gladys?" she demanded.

"I don't know," the other explained. "But the first moment I saw you in the office, I said to myself, 'Of course her name is Gladys.' Mine is Charmian."

"Is it?" said Cornelia, not so much with preoccupation, perhaps, as with indifference. She thought it rather a nice name, but she did not know what she had to do with it.

"Yes," the other said, as if she had somehow expected to be doubted. "My last name's Maybough." Cornelia kept on at her work without remark, and Miss Maybough pursued, as if it were a branch of autobiography, "I'm going to have lunch; aren't you?"

Cornelia sighed dreamily, as she drew back for an effect of her drawing, which she held up on the table before her, "Is it time?"

"Do you suppose they would be letting me talk so to you if it weren't? The monitor would have been down on me long ago."

Cornelia had noticed a girl who seemed to be in authority, and who sat where she could oversee and overhear all that went on.

"Is she one of the students?" she asked.

Miss Maybough nodded. "Elected every month. She's awful. You can't do anything with her when she's on duty, but she's a little dear when she isn't. You'll like her." Miss Maybough leaned toward her, and joined Cornelia in a study of her drawing. "How splendidly you're getting it. It's very *chic*. Oh, anybody can see that *you've* got genius!"

Her admiration made no visible impression upon Cornelia, and for a moment she looked a little disappointed; then she took a basket from under the table, and drew from it a bottle of some yellowish liquid, an orange and a bit of sponge cake. "Are you going to have yours here?" she asked, as Cornelia opened a paper with the modest sandwich in it which she had made at breakfast, and fetched from her boarding-house. "Oh,

I'm so glad you haven't brought anything to drink with you! I felt almost sure you hadn't, and now you've got to share mine." She took a cup from her basket, and in spite of Cornelia's protest that she never drank anything but water at dinner, she poured it full of tea for her. "I'll drink out of the bottle," she said. "I like to. Some of the girls bring chocolate, but I think there's nothing like cold tea for the brain. Chocolate's so clogging; so's milk; but sometimes I bring that; it's glorious, drinking it out of the can." She tilted the bottle to her lips, and half drained it at a draught. "I always feel that I'm working with inspiration after I've had my cold tea. Of course they won't let *you* stay here long," she added.

"Why?" Cornelia fluttered back in alarm.

"When they see your work they'll see that you're fit for still-life, at least."

"Oh!" said Cornelia, vexed at having been scared for nothing. "I guess they won't be in any great hurry about it."

"How magnificent!" said Miss Maybough. "Of course, with that calm of yours, you can wait, as if you had eternity before you. Do you know that you are *terribly* calm?"

Cornelia turned and gave her a long stare. Miss

Maybough broke her bit of cake in two, and offered her half, and Cornelia took it mechanically, but ate her sandwich. "*I* feel as if I had eternity *behind* me, I've been in the Preparatory so long."

On the common footing this drop to the solid ground gave, Cornelia asked her how long.

"Well, it's the beginning of my second year, now. If they don't let me go to round hands pretty soon, I shall have to see if I can't get the form by modelling. That's the best way. I suppose it's my imagination; it carries me away so, and I don't see the thing as it is before me; that's what they say. But with the clay, I'll *have* to, don't you know. Well, you know some of the French painters model their whole picture in clay and paint it, before they touch the canvas, any way. I shall try it here awhile longer, and then if I can't get to the round in any other way, I'll take to the clay. If sculpture concentrates you more, perhaps I may stick to it altogether. Art is one, anyhow, and the great thing is to *live* it. Don't you think so?"

"I don't know," said Cornelia. "I'm not certain I know what you mean."

"You will," said Miss Maybough, "after you've been here awhile, and get used to the atmosphere. I

don't believe I really knew what life meant before I came to the Synthesis. When you get to realizing the standards of the Synthesis, then you begin to breathe freely for the first time. I expect to pass the rest of my days here. I shouldn't care if I stayed till I was thirty. How old are you?"

"I'm going on twenty," said Cornelia. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing. You can't begin too young; though some people think you oughtn't to come before you're eighteen. I look upon my days before I came here as simply wasted. Don't you want to go out and sit on the stairs awhile?"

"I don't believe I do," said Cornelia, taking up her drawing again, as if she were going on with it.

"Horrors!" Miss Maybough put her hand out over the sketch. "You don't mean that you're going to carry it any farther?"

"Why, it isn't finished yet," Cornelia began.

"Of *course* it isn't, and it never ought to be! I hope you're not going to turn out a *niggler! Please* don't! I couldn't bear to have you. Nobody will respect you if you *finish*. Don't! If you won't come out with me and get a breath of fresh air, do start a new drawing! I want them to see this in the rough. It's *so* bold."

Miss Maybough had left her own drawing in the rough, but it could not be called bold; though if she had seen the block hand with a faltering eye, she seemed to have had a fearless vision of many other things, and she had covered her paper with a fantastic medley of grotesque shapes, out of that imagination which she had given Cornelia to know was so fatally mischievous to her in its uninvited activities. "*Don't* look at them!" she pleaded, when Cornelia involuntarily glanced at her study. "My only hope is to hate them. I almost *pray* to be delivered from them. Let's talk of something else." She turned the sheet over. "Do you mind my having said that about your drawing?"

"No!" said Cornelia, provoked to laughter by the solemnity of the demand. "Why should I?"

"Oh, I don't know. Do you think you shall like me? I mean, do you care if I like *you* — very, *very* much?"

"I don't suppose I could stop it if I did, could I?" asked Cornelia.

The Sphinx seemed to find heart to smile. "Of course, I'm ridiculous. But I do hope we're going to be friends. Tell me about yourself. Or, have some more tea!"

XIV.

"I DON'T want any more tea, thank you," said Cornelia, "and there isn't anything to tell."

"There must be!" the other girl insisted, clinging to her bottle with tragic intensity. "Any one can see that *you've* lived. What part of the country did you come from?"

"Ohio," said Cornelia, as the best way to be done with it.

"And have you ever been in Santa Fé?"

"Goodness, no! Why, it's in New Mexico!"

"Yes; I was born there. Then my father went to Colorado. He isn't living, now. Are your father and mother living?"

"My mother is," said Cornelia; the words brought up a vision of her mother, as she must be sitting that moment in the little front-room, and a mist came suddenly before her eyes; she shut her lips hard to keep them from trembling.

"I see, you worship her," said Miss Maybough fervidly, keeping her gaze fixed upon Cornelia. "You are homesick!"

"I'm *not* homesick!" said Cornelia, angry that she should be so and that she should be denying it.

"Mine," said the other, "died while I was a baby. She had Indian blood," she added in the same way in which she had said her name was Charmian.

"*Did* she?" Cornelia asked.

"That is the legend," said Miss Maybough solemnly. "Her grandmother was a Zuñi princess." She turned her profile. "See?"

"It does look a little Indian," said Cornelia.

"Some people think it's Egyptian," Miss Maybough suggested, as if she had been leading up to the notion, and were anxious not to have it ignored.

Cornelia examined the profile steadily presented, more carefully: "It's a good deal more Egyptian."

Miss Maybough relieved her profile from [illegible], and continued, "We've been everywhere. Paris two years. That's where I took up art in [illegible]; Julian, you know. Mamma didn't want me to; she wanted me to go into society there; and she does here; but I hate it. Don't you think society is very frivolous, or, any way, very stupid?"

"I don't know much about it. I never [illegible] much," said Cornelia.

"Well, I hope you're not conventional. [illegible] conventional *here*."

"I don't believe I'm conventional enough to hurt," said Cornelia.

"You have humor, too," said Miss Maybough, thoughtfully, as if she had been mentally cataloguing her characteristics. "*You'll* be popular."

Cornelia stared at her and turned to her drawing.

"But you're proud," said the other, "I can see that. I adore pride. It must have been your pride that fascinated me at the first glance. Do you mind my being fascinated with you?"

Cornelia wanted to laugh; at the same time she wondered what new kind of crazy person she had got with; this was hardly one of the art-students that went wild from overwork. Miss Maybough kept on without waiting to be answered: "I haven't got a bit of pride, myself. I could just let you walk over me. How does it feel to be proud? What are you proud *for?*"

Cornelia quieted a first impulse to resent this pursuit. "I don't think I'm very proud. I used to be proud when I was little; — I guess you ought to have asked me then."

"Oh, yes! Tell me about yourself!" Miss Maybough implored again, but she went on as before without giving Cornelia any chance to reply. "Of

course, when I say mamma, I mean my step-mother. She's very good to me, but she doesn't understand me. You'll like her. I'll tell you what sort of a person she is." She did so at such length that the lunch hour passed before she finished, and a hush fell upon all the babbling voices about, as the monitor came back to her place.

Toward the end of the afternoon the monitor's vigilance relaxed again, and Miss Maybough began to talk again. "If you want to be anything by the Synthesis standards," she said, "you've got to keep this up a whole year, you know." It was now four o'clock, and Cornelia had been working steadily since eleven, except for the half-hour at lunch-time. "They'll see how well you draw; you needn't be afraid of their not doing that; and they'll let you go on to the round at once, perhaps. But if you're truly Synthetic in spirit, you won't want to. You'll want to get all you can out of the block; and it'll take you a year to do that; then another year for the full length, you know. At first we only had the block here, and a good many people think now that the full-length Preparatory encroaches on the Antique. Sometimes they even let you put in backgrounds here, but it don't matter much: when the instructor in the

Antique gets hold of you he makes you unlearn everything you've learnt in the full-length. *He's* grand."

A girl who was working at the other end of the table said with a careless air, "They told me I might go up to the Antique to-day."

"Lida!" Miss Maybough protested, in a voice hoarse with admiration.

"Yes; but I'm not going."

"*Why* not? I should think you would be so proud. *How* did they come to tell you?"

"Oh, they just said I might. But I'm not going. They're so severe in the Antique. They just discourage you."

"Yes, that is so," said Miss Maybough, with a sigh of solemn joy. "They make you feel as if you couldn't draw at all."

"Yes," said the other girl. "They act as if you didn't know a thing."

"I *wouldn't* go," said Miss Maybough.

"I don't know. Perhaps I may." The girl went on drawing, and Miss Maybough turned to Cornelia again.

"Towards the end of your third year — or perhaps you don't like to have your future all mapped out. Does it scare you?"

"I guess if it does I shall live through it," said Cornelia steadily; her heart was beginning to quake somewhat, but she was all the more determined not to show it.

"Well, the third year you may get to painting still-life, while you keep up your drawing afternoons here. The next year you'll go into the antique class, if they'll let you, and draw heads, and keep up your still-life mornings. When they think you're fit for it, they'll let you do an arm, maybe, and work along that way to the full figure; and that takes another whole winter. Then you go into the life class, one of them, all the morning, and keep drawing from the antique in the afternoons, or else do heads from the model. You do a head every day, and then paint it out, and begin another the next day. You learn to sacrifice self to art. It's grand! Well, then, the next winter you keep on just the same, and as many winters after that as you please. You know what one instructor said to a girl that asked him what she should do after she had been five years in the Synthesis?"

"No, I don't," answered Cornelia anxiously.

"Stay five years more!"

Miss Maybough did not give this time to sink very deep into Cornelia's spirit. "Will you let me call you by your first name?"

"Why, I've hardly ever been called by any other," said Cornelia simply.

"And will you call me Charmian?"

"I had just as lief." Cornelia laughed; she could not help it; that girl seemed so odd; she did not know whether she liked her or not.

"What poise you *have* got!" sighed Charmian. "May I come to see you? Not a ceremonious call. In your own room; where we can talk."

Cornelia thought that if they went on as they had that day, they should probably talk quite enough at the Synthesis; but she said, "Why, yes, I should like to have you, if you won't care for my sitting on the trunk. There's only one chair."

"Let *me* have the trunk! Promise me you'll let me sit on the trunk. It's divine! Is it in a Salvation Hotel?"

"What do you mean?" asked Cornelia.

"Why, that's what they call the places that the Young Women's Christian Association keep."

"No, it isn't. It's just a boarding-house." Cornelia wrote her address on a piece of paper, and Charmian received it with solemn rapture. She caught Cornelia in a sudden embrace and kissed her, before Cornelia could help herself. "Oh, I adore you!" she cried.

They parted at the head of the stairs, where they found themselves among groups of students arriving from all parts of the place, and pausing for Synthesis gossip, which Cornelia could not have entered into yet if she had wished. She escaped, and walked home to her boarding-house with rather a languid pace, and climbed to her little room on the fifth story, and lay down on her bed. It was harder work than teaching, and her back ached, and her heart was heavy with the thought of five years in the Synthesis, when she barely had money enough for one winter. She was not afraid of the work; she liked that; she would be glad to spend her whole life at it; but she could not give five years to it, and perhaps ten. She was ashamed now to think she had once dreamed of somehow slipping through in a year, and getting the good of it without working for it. She tried to plan how she could go home and teach a year, and then come back and study a year, and so on; but by the end of the twenty years that it would take for ten years' study at this rate, she would be an old woman of forty, ready to drop into the grave. She was determined not to give up, and if she did not give up, there was no other end to it; or so it seemed at the close of her first day in the Synthesis.

She was very homesick, and she would have liked to give up altogether and go home. But she thought of what people would say; of how her mother, who would be so glad to see her, would feel. She would not be a baby, and she turned her face over in the pillow and sobbed.

XV.

CORNELIA thought that perhaps Mr. Ludlow would feel it due to Mrs. Burton to come and ask how she was getting on; but if she did not wish him to come she had reason to be glad, for the whole week passed, and she did not see him, or hear anything from him. She did not blame him, for she had been very uncouth, and no doubt he had done his whole duty in meeting her at the depot, and seeing her safely housed the first night. She wished to appreciate his kindness, and when she found herself wondering a little at his not caring to know anything more about her, she made much of it. If it was not all that she could have imagined from his offer to be of use to her in any way he could, she reminded herself that he had made that offer a very long time ago, and that she never meant to use him. Beside, she was proud of having made her start alone, and she knew which way she wished to go, though the way seemed so hard and long at times. She was not sure that all the students at the Synthesis were so clear as to their direction, but they

all had the same faith in the Synthesis and its methods. They hardly ever talked to her of anything else, and first and last they talked a good deal to her. It was against the rules to loiter and talk in the corridors, as much against the rules as smoking; but every now and then you came upon a young man with a cigarette, and he was nearly always talking with a group of girls. At lunch-time the steps and window-seats were full, and the passages were no longer thoroughfares. After the first day Cornelia came out with the rest; Charmian Maybough said that one could not get into the spirit of the Synthesis unless one did; and in fact those who wished to work and those who would rather have played, as it seemed to her, met there in the same æsthetic equality. She found herself acquainted with a great many girls whose names she did not know, in the fervor of the common interest, the perpetual glow of enthusiasm which crowned the severest ordeals of the Synthesis with the halo of happy martyrdom if not the wreath of victory.

They talked about the different instructors, how awful they were, and how they made you cry sometimes, they were so hard on your work; but if you amounted to anything, you did not mind it when you got to feel what they meant; then you *wanted*

them to be harsh. They said of one, "My! You ought to see him! *He* can spoil your drawing for you! He just takes your charcoal, and puts thick black lines all over everything. It don't do to finish much for *him*." They celebrated another for sitting down in front of your work, and drooping in silent despair before it for awhile, and then looking up at you in cold disgust, and asking, "What made you draw it *that* way?" as if it were inconceivable anybody should have been willing to do it so. There were other instructors who were known to have the idea of getting at the best in you by a sympathetic interest in what you had tried for, and looking for some good in it. The girls dramatized their manner of doing this; they did not hold them in greater regard than the harder masters, but they did not hold them in less, and some of them seemed to value an instructor as much for the way he squinted his eyes at your drawing as for what he said of it.

The young men did not talk so much of the instructors; they were more reticent about everything. But some had formed themselves upon them, and you could tell which each of these was studying under; or this was what Charmian Maybough said.

She led Cornelia all about through the quaint old

rookery, with its wandering corridors, and its clusters of rooms distributed at random in the upper stories of several buildings which the Synthesis had gathered to itself as if by a sort of affinity, and she lectured upon every one and everything.

It was against usage for students in the lower grades to visit the upper classes when they were at work; but Charmian contrived stolen glimpses of the still-life rooms and the rooms where they were working from the draped models. For the first time Cornelia saw the irregular hemicycle of students silently intent upon the silent forms and faces of those strange creatures who sat tranced in a lifeless immobility, as if the long practice of their trade had resolved them into something as impersonal as the innumerable pictures studied from them. She even penetrated with Charmian to the women's life-room, where you really could not go while the model was posing, and where they had to time their visit at the moment when the girls had left off for lunch, and were chattering over their chocolate. They had set it out on the vacant model-stand, and they invited their visitors to break bread with them: the bread they had brought to rub out their drawings with. They made Cornelia feel as much at home with them on the summit they had

reached, as she felt with the timidest beginners in the Preparatory. Charmian had reported everywhere that she had genius, and in the absence of proofs to the contrary the life-class accepted her as if she had. Their talk was not very different from the talk of the students in the lower grades. They spoke of the Synthesis, and asked her how she liked it, but they did not wait for her to say. They began to descant upon their instructors, and the pictures their instructors had last exhibited at the Academy or the American Artists; and the things that the old Synthesis pupils had there. Cornelia learned here that even actual Synthetics had things in the exhibitions, and that in the last Academy a Preparatory girl had sold a picture; she determined that before the winter was over she would at least give the Academy a chance to refuse the picture of another Preparatory girl.

She got Charmian to point out the girl who had sold the picture; she was a little, quiet-looking thing; Cornelia saw some of her work in round hands and she did not think it was better than she could do herself. She took courage and dreamed of trying not to disappoint the hopes of immediate performance, which she knew her mother would be having in spite of her

pretending the contrary. Her mother had written that she must not work herself down, trying to learn too fast, but must take the whole winter for it. Cornelia wondered what she would think if she knew how little a person could be expected to do in one winter, in the regular Synthesis way.

She was happier at the end of the first week than she had been at the end of the first day, though she was very tired, and was glad to stop at the earlier hour when most of the students left their work on Saturday afternoon. She had begun to feel the charm of the Synthesis, which every one said she would feel. She was already a citizen of the little republic where the heaviest drudgery was sweet with a vague, high faith and hope. It was all a strange happiness to her, and yet not strange. It was like a heritage of her own that she had come into; something she was born to, a right, a natural condition.

She did not formulate this, or anything; she did not ask herself why the frivolities and affectations which disgusted her in the beginning no longer offended her so much; she only saw that some of the most frivolous and affected of her fellow-citizens were the cleverest; and that the worst of them were better than they might have been where the ideal was less gener-

ous. She did not know then or afterwards just why some of them were there, and they did not seem to know themselves. There were some who could reasonably expect to live by their art; there were more who could hope to live by teaching it. But there were others who had no definite aim or purpose, and seemed to think their study would shape them to some design. They were trying it, they did not know clearly why, or at least were not able to say clearly why. There were several rich girls, and they worked from the love of it, as hard as the poorest. There were some through whom she realized what Ludlow meant when he spoke to her mother of the want that often went hand in hand with art; there were others even more pitiful, who struggled with the bare sufficiency of gift to keep within the Synthesis. But even among the girls who were so poor that they had to stint themselves of food and fire, for art's sake, there were the bravest and gayest spirits; and some of these who could never have learned to draw well if they had spent their lives in the Synthesis, and were only waiting till their instructor should find the heart to forbid them further endeavor, were so sweet and good that Cornelia's heart ached for them.

At first she was overawed by all the students, simply

because they were all older students at the Synthesis than she was. Then she included them without distinction in the slight that she felt for the chatter and the airs of some. After that she made her exceptions among them; she began to see how every one honored and admired the hard workers. She could not revert to her awe of them, even of the hardest workers; but she became more tolerant of the idlest and vaguest. She compared herself with the clever ones, and owned herself less clever, not without bitterness, but certainly with sincerity, and with a final humility that enabled her to tolerate those who were least clever.

XVI.

When she got home from the Synthesis the first Saturday afternoon, Cornelia climbed up the four flights of stairs that led to her little room, and lay down to rest, as she promised Mrs. Burton she would do every day; some days she did not. She had to lie on her bed, which filled two-thirds of the room. There was a bureau with a glass, which she could not see the bottom of her skirt in without jumping up; and a wash-stand with a shut-down lid, where she wrote her letters and drew; a chair stood between that and her trunk, which was next the door, and let the door open part way.

It seemed very cramped at first, but she soon got used to it, and then she did not think about it; but accepted it as she did everything else in the life that was all so strange to her. She had never been in a boarding-house before, and she did not know whether it was New York usage or not, that her trunk, which the expressman had managed to leave in the lower hall, should be left standing there for twenty-four

hours after his escape, and that then she should be asked to take some things out of it so that it should not be too heavy for the serving-maids to carry up to her room. There was no man-servant in the place; but the landlady said that they expected to have a furnace-man as soon as it came cold weather.

The landlady was such an indistinct quality, that it could seldom be known whether she was at home or not, and when she was identifiably present, whether she had promised or had not promised to do this or that. People were always trying to see her for some reason or no reason, and it was said that the best time to find her was at table. This was not so easy; the meals had a certain range in time, and the landlady was nominally at the head of the table; but those who came early to find her made the mistake of not having come late, and if you came late you just missed her. Yet she was sometimes actually to be encountered at the head of the stairs from the kitchen, or evanescing from the parlor; and somehow the house was operated; the meals came and went, and the smell of their coming and going filled the hall-way from the ground floor to the attic. Some people complained of the meals, but Cornelia's traditions were so simple that she thought them a constant succession of prodigies, with

never less than steak, fish and hash for breakfast, and always turkey and cranberry sauce for dinner, and often ice-cream; sometimes the things were rather burnt, but she did not see that there was much to find fault with. She celebrated the luxury in her letters home, and she said that she liked the landlady, too, and that they had got to be great friends; in fact the landlady reminded the girl of her own mother in the sort of springless effectiveness with which she brought things to pass, when you would never have expected any result whatever; and she was gentle like her mother, and simple-hearted, with all her elusiveness. But she was not neat, like Mrs. Saunders; the house went at loose ends. Cornelia found fluff under her bed that must have been there a long time. The parlor and the dining-room were kept darkened, and no one could have told what mysteries their corners and set pieces of furniture harbored. The carpets, where the subdued light struck them, betrayed places worn down to the warp. Mrs. Montgomery herself had a like effect of unsparing use; her personal upholstery showed frayed edges and broken woofs, which did not seriously discord with her nerveless gentility.

The parlor was very long and rather narrow, and it was crossed at the rear by the dining-room which

showed the table in stages of preparation or dismantling through sliding-doors never quite shut. At intervals along the parlor walls were set sofas in linen brocade and yellow jute; and various easy and uneasy chairs in green plush stood about in no definite relation to the black-walnut, marble-topped centre-table. A scarf, knotted and held by a spelter vase to one of the marble mantles, for there were two, recorded a moment of the æsthetic craze which had ceased before it got farther amidst the earlier and honester ugliness of the room. The gas-fixtures were of the vine-leaf and grape-cluster bronze-age; some of the garlands which ought to have been attached to the burners, hung loose from the parent stem, without the effort on the part of any witness to complete the artistic intention. In the evening, the lady-boarders received their gentlemen-callers in the parlor; their lady-callers were liable at all times to be asked if they would not like to go to the boarders' rooms, and whether they expressed this preference or not, they were directed where to find them by the maid, who then rapidly disappeared down the kitchen stairs.

In fact, the door-service at Mrs. Montgomery's was something she would probably have deprecated if any one had asked her to do so. It was the charge of a

large, raw-boned Irish girl, who made up by her athletic physique and her bass voice for the want of a man-servant on the premises. She brow-beat visitors into acceptance of the theory that the persons they came to see were not at home, especially if they showed signs of intending to wait in the parlor while she went upstairs to find out. Those who suffered from her were of the sex least fitted to combat her. The gentlemen boarders seldom had callers; when they had, their callers did not ask whether their friends were in or not; they went and saw for themselves.

The gentlemen at Mrs. Montgomery's were fewer than the ladies, and they were for several reasons in greater favor. For one thing they gave less trouble: they had a less lively fear of mice, and they were not so apt to be out of health and to want their meals sent up; they ate more, but they did not waste so much, and they never did any sort of washing in their rooms. Cornelia did not know who or what some of them were; but she made sure of a theatrical manager; two or three gentlemen in different branches of commerce; a newspaper writer of some sort, and an oldish gentleman who had been with Mrs. Montgomery a great while, and did not seem to be anything but a gentleman

boarder, pure and simple. They were all very civil and quiet, and they bore with the amiable American fortitude the hardships of the common lot at Mrs. Montgomery's, which Cornelia underwent ignorantly as necessary incidents of life in New York.

She now fell asleep where she lay, and she was startled from her nap, but hardly surprised, to hear her name spoken in the hall far below, as if it were a theme of contention between the bass-voiced Irish girl and some one at the street door, who supported the other side of the question in low, indistinct, lady-like murmurs.

"No, she don't be in," said the Irish girl bluntly. The polite murmur insisted, and the Irish girl said, with finality, "Well, then, yous can go up yourselves and see; the room is right over the dure, four flights up."

Cornelia jumped up and tried to pull her hair into a knot before the glass. There came a tap at her door and the voice of Charmian Maybough asked, "May I come in, Miss Saunders, — Cornelia?"

"Yes," said Cornelia, and she opened the door as far as her trunk would let her.

Charmian pushed impetuously in. She took Cornelia in her arms and kissed her, as if they had not met for a long time.

"Oh," she said, whirling about, so as to sweep the whole room with her glance, before sinking down on Cornelia's trunk, "why can't *I* have something like this? Well, I shall have, I hope, before I die, yet. What made her say you weren't in? I knew you were." She rose and flew about the room, and examined it in detail. She was very beautifully dressed, in a street costume of immediate fashion, without a suggestion of the æstheticism of the picturesque gown she wore at the Synthesis; that had originality, but Cornelia perceived with the eye trained to see such differences, that this had authority. Charmian could not help holding and carrying herself differently in it, too. She was exquisitely gloved, and Cornelia instinctively felt that her hat was from Paris, though till then she had never seen a Paris hat to know it. She might have been a little overawed by it, if the wearer had not abruptly asked her what she thought of it.

"Well," said Cornelia, with her country directness, which was so different from the other's abruptness, "I think it's about the most perfect thing I ever saw."

Charmian sighed. "I saw you looking at it. Yes, it *is* a dream. But it's a badge of slavery. So's the whole costume. Look how I'm laced!" She flung

open the jacket and revealed a waist certainly much smaller than she had earlier in the day. "That's the way it goes through my whole life. Mamma is dead set against the artistic, and I'm dead set against the fashionable. As long as I'm at the Synthesis, I do as the Synthetics do. I dress like the Synthesis, and I think like it, and I act like it. As soon as I get home in the afternoon, I have to be of the world worldly. I put on a Worth frock, and mamma would make me put on a Worth spirit, if she could. I do my best to conform, because it's the bargain, and I'll keep my word if it kills me. *Now* you see what a double life I lead! If I could only be steeped in hopeless poverty to the lips! If I could have a room like this, even! Sometimes I'm so bewildered by the twofold existence I'm leading, I don't really know what I'm saying. Those your things, of course?" She sprang from Cornelia's trunk, which she had sank down upon again, and swiftly traversed the sketches Cornelia had pinned about the wall. "What touch! Yes, you merely have to live on, to be anything you like. It'll do itself for *you*. Well, I suppose you'll have to see her." She turned about to Cornelia with an air of deprecation. "Mamma, you know. She's down stairs waiting for us. She thinks it right to come with me

always. I dare say it is. She isn't so very bad, you know. Only she insists upon knowing all the girls I take a fancy to, herself. You needn't be afraid of her."

"I don't know why I should be afraid of anybody," said Cornelia.

The darker corner of the long parlor was occupied by a young couple in the earnest inquiry into each other's psychological peculiarities which marks a stage of the passion of love. It obliged them to get very close together, where they sat, she on a lounge and he in the chair, which he kept pulling nearer and nearer; they fulfilled these conditions and exchanged their observations with a freedom that ignored the presence of the lady sitting somewhat severely upright between the two long, front windows, exactly midway of the dingy lace curtains, trained fan-wise on the carpet. They were not disturbed when Cornelia and Charmian appeared; the young lady continued to dangle the tassel of a cushion through her fingers, and the young man leaned toward her with his face in his hand, and his elbow sunk in the arm of the lounge; but the other lady rose at once and came quickly forward, as if escaping from them. Beside the tall girls she looked rather little, and she was decidedly blonde

against their brunette color. She wore a veil that came just between her upper and her lower lip, and that stirred lightly when she spoke. She was dressed with the same authoritative fashion as Charmian, but not so simply.

She did not wait for her daughter to speak, but took Cornelia's hand, and said in a soft voice, "Miss Saunders? I am very glad we found you at home. My daughter has been speaking to me about you, and we hoped to have come sooner, but we couldn't manage together before."

"Won't you sit down?" asked Cornelia.

"No, I thank you," Mrs. Maybough returned, with a velvety tenderness of tone that seemed to convey assent. "We shall be rather late, as it is. I hope you're comfortably situated here."

"Oh, very," said Cornelia. "I've never been away from home before, and of course it isn't like home."

"Yes," said Mrs. Maybough, "one misses the refinements of home in such places." She turned and swept the appointments of the room, including the students of psychology, with a critical eye.

"I wish *I* could come here," sighed the daughter. "If I could have a room like Cornelia's, mamma! I *wish* you could see it."

"I'm glad you're pleasantly placed, Miss Saunders. I hope you're not working too hard at the Synthesis. I understand the young ladies there are so enthusiastic."

"Oh, no," Cornelia protested.

"Of course she is!" said Charmian. "Everybody works too hard at the Synthesis. It's the ideal of the place. We woke her out of a nap, and I know she was tired to death."

Cornelia could not deny it, and so she said nothing.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Maybough, non-committally; "that won't do." She paused, without intermitting the scrutiny which Cornelia felt she had been subjecting her to from the first moment through her veil. "You mustn't wear yourself out." She paused again, and then while Charmian turned away with an effect of impatience, she asked, "Do you ever go out on Sundays?"

"Why, I don't know," Cornelia began, not certain whether Mrs. Maybough meant walking out or driving out; young people did both in Pymantoning.

Mrs. Maybough pursued: "We receive on Thursdays, but we have a few friends coming in to-morrow afternoon, and we should be very glad to see you, if you have nothing better."

The invitation was so tentatively, so gingerly offered in manner, if not in words; that Cornelia was not quite sure it had been given. She involuntarily searched her memory for something better before she spoke; for the first time in her life she was about to invent a previous engagement, when Charmian suddenly turned and laid her arms about her neck.

"You'll come, of course!"

"Charmian!" said Mrs. Maybough. It would have been hard to tell whether she was reproving the action or the urgence. "Then we shall hope to see you?"

"Yes, thank you," said Cornelia.

"Do come!" said Charmian, as if she had not yet accepted. "I can't let it be a whole day and two nights before I see you again!" She put her arm round Cornelia's waist, as the girl went with them to the outer door, to open it for them, in her village fashion. In the hall, Charmian whispered passionately, "Don't you *envy* them? *Oh*, if I could live in such a house with you, and with people like that just to look at!"

"My dear!" said Mrs. Maybough.

"They seem to be engaged," said Cornelia placidly, without sense of anything wrong in the appearance of the fact.

"Evidently," said Mrs. Maybough.

"I shouldn't care for the engagement," said Charmian. "That would be rather horrid. But if you were in love, to feel that you needn't hide it or pretend not to be! That is life! I'm coming here, mamma!"

XVII.

MRS. MAYBOUGH had an apartment in the Mandan Flats, and her windows looked out over miles of the tinted foliage of the Park, and down across the avenue into one of the pretty pools which light up its woodland reaches. The position was superb, and the Mandan was in some sort worthy of it. The architect had done his best to give unity and character to its tremendous mass, and he had failed in much less measure than the architects of such buildings usually do. Cornelia dismounted into the dirty street in front of it from a shabby horse-car, and penetrated its dimmed splendors of mosaic pavement and polished granite pillars and frescoed vaults, with a heart fluttered by a hall-boy all over buttons, and a janitor in blue and silver livery, and an elevator-man in like keeping with American ideals. She was disgusted with herself that she should be so scared, and she was ashamed of the relief she felt when a servant in plain clothes opened Mrs. Maybough's door to her; she knew he must be a servant because he had on a dress-

coat and a white tie, and she had heard the Burtons joke about how they were always taking the waiters for clergymen at first in Europe. He answered her with subdued respectfulness when she asked for the ladies, and then he went forward and for the first time in her life she heard her name called into a drawing-room, as she had read it was done in England, but never could imagine it. The man held aside the portière for her to pass, but before she could pass there came a kind of joyous whoop from within, a swishing of skirts toward her, and she was caught in the arms of Charmian, who kissed her again and again, and cried out over her goodness in coming.

"Why, didn't you expect me?" Cornelia asked bluntly.

"Yes, but I was just pretending you wouldn't come, or something had happened to keep you, so that I could have the good of the revulsion when you did come, and feel that it was worth all I had suffered. Don't you like to do that?"

"I don't believe I ever did it," said Cornelia.

"That's what makes you so glorious," Charmian exulted. "You don't *need* to do such things. You're equal to life as it comes. But I have to prepare myself for it every way I can. Don't you see?"

She led her, all embraced, into the drawing-room, where she released her to the smooth welcome of Mrs. Maybough. There was no one else in the vast, high room which was lit with long windows and darkened again with long, thick curtains, but was still light enough to let Cornelia see the elaborate richness of Mrs. Maybough's dress and the simple richness of Charmian's. She herself wore her street-dress and she did not know whether she ought to keep her hat on or not; but Charmian said she must pour tea with her, and she danced Cornelia down the splendid length of the three great salons opening into each other along the front of the apartment, toward her own room where she said she must leave it. The drawing-room was a harmony of pictures so rich and soft, and rugs so rich and soft, that the colors seemed to play from wall to floor and back again in the same mellow note; the dimness of the dining-room was starred with the glimmer of silver and cut-glass and the fainter reflected light of polished mahogany; the a library was a luxury of low leather chairs and lounges, lurking window-seats, curtained in warm colors, and shelves full of even ranks of books in French bindings of blue and green leather. There was a great carved library table in front of the hearth where a soft-

coal fire flickered with a point or two of flame; on the mantel a French clock of classic architecture caught the eye with the gleam of its pendulum as it vibrated inaudibly. It was all extremely well done, infinitely better done than Cornelia could have known. It was tasteful and refined, with the taste and refinement of the decorator who had wished to produce the effect of long establishment and well-bred permanency; the Mandan Flats were really not two years old, and Mrs. Maybough had taken her apartment in the spring and had been in it only a few weeks.

"Now all this is *mamma*," Charmian said, suffering Cornelia to pause for a backward glance at the rooms as she pushed open a door at the side of the library. "I simply endure it because it's in the bargain. But it's no more me than my gown is. This is where I *stay*, when I'm with mamma, but I'm going to show you where I *live*, where I *dream*." She glided down the electric-lighted corridor where they found themselves, and apologized over her shoulder to Cornelia behind her: "Of course, you can't have an attic in a flat; and anything like rain on the roof is practically impossible; but I've come as near to it as I could. Be careful! Here are the stairs." She mounted

eight or ten steps that crooked upward, and flung wide a door at the top of the landing. It gave into a large room fronting northward and lighted with one wide window; the ceiling sloped and narrowed down to this from the quadrangular vault, and the cool gray walls rose not much above Cornelia's head where they met the roof. They were all stuck about with sketches in oil and charcoal. An easel with a canvas on it stood convenient to the light; a flesh-tinted lay-figure in tumbled drapery drooped limply in a corner; a table littered with palettes and brushes and battered tubes of color was carelessly pushed against the window; there were some lustrous rugs hung up beside the door; the floor was bare except for a great tiger-skin, with the head on, that sprawled in front of the fire-place. This was very simple, with rough iron fire-dogs; the low mantel was scattered with cigarettes, cigars in Chinese bronze vases at either end, and midway a medley of pipes, long-stemmed in clay and stubbed in briar-wood.

"Good gracious!" said Cornelia. "Do you smoke?"

"Not yet," Charmian answered gravely, "but I'm going to learn: Bernhardt does. These are just some pipes that I got the men at the Synthesis to give me;

pipes are so full of character. And isn't this something *like?*" She invited Cornelia to a study of the place by turning about and looking at it herself. "It seemed as if it never *would* come together, at one time. Everything was in it, just as it should be; and then I found it was the ridiculous ceiling that was the trouble. It came to me like a flash, what to do, and I got this canvas painted the color of the walls, and sloped so as to cut off half the height of the room; and now it's a perfect symphony. You wouldn't have thought it wasn't a real ceiling?"

"No, I shouldn't," said Cornelia, as much surprised as Charmian could have wished.

"You can imagine what a relief it is to steal away here from all that unreality of mamma's, down there, and give yourself up to the truth of art; I just draw a long breath when I get in here, and leave the world behind me. Why, when I get off here alone, for a minute, I unlace!"

Cornelia went about looking at the sketches on the walls; they were all that mixture of bad drawing and fantastic thinking which she was used to in the things Charmian scribbled over her paper at the Synthesis. She glanced toward the easel, but Charmian said, "Don't look at it! There's nothing there; I haven't

decided what I shall do yet. I did think I should paint this tiger skin, but I don't feel easy painting the skin of a tiger I haven't killed myself. If I could get mamma to take me out to India and let me shoot one! But don't you think the whole place is perfect? I've tried to make it just what a studio ought to be, and yet keep it free from pose, don't you know?"

"Yes," said Cornelia. "I've never seen a studio, before."

"You poor thing, you don't mean it!" cried Charmian in deep pity. Cornelia said nothing, and Charmian went on with an air of candor, "Well, I haven't seen a great many myself — only two or three — but I know how they are, and it's easy enough to realize one. What I want is to have the atmosphere of art about me, all the time. I'm like a fish out of water when I'm out of the atmosphere of art. I intend to spend my whole time here when I'm not at the Synthesis."

"I should think it would be a good place to work," Cornelia conceded.

"Yes, and I *am* going to work here," said Charmian. "The great trouble with me is that I have so many things in my mind I don't know which to begin on first. That's why the Synthesis is so good for me;

it concentrates me, if it *is* on a block hand. *You're* concentrated by nature, and so you can't feel what a glorious pang it is to be fixed to one spot like a butterfly with a pin through you. I don't see how I ever lived without the Synthesis. I'm going to have a wolf-hound — as soon as I can get a good-tempered one that the man can lead out in the Park for exercise — to curl up here in front of the fire; and I'm going to have foils and masks over the chimney. As soon as I'm a member of the Synthesis I'm going to get them to let me be one of the monitors: that'll concentrate me, if anything will, keeping the rest in order, and I can get a lot of ideas from posing the model; don't you think so? But *you've* got all the ideas you want, already. Aren't you going to join the sketch class?"

"I don't know but I am," said Cornelia. "I haven't got quite turned round yet."

"Well, you must do it. "I'm going to have the class here, some day, as soon as I get the place in *perfect* order. I must have a suit of Japanese armor for that corner, over there; and then two or three of those queer-looking, old, long, faded trunks, you know, with eastern stuffs gaping out of them, to set along the wall. I should be ashamed to have anybody see

it now; but you have an eye, you can supply every thing with a glance. I'm going to have a bed made up in the alcove, over there, and sleep here, sometimes: just that broad lounge, you know, with some rugs on it — I've got the cushions, you see, already — and mice running over you, for the crumbs you've left when you've got hungry sitting up late. Are you afraid of mice?"

"Well, I shouldn't care to have them run over me, much," said Cornelia.

"Well, I shouldn't either," said Charmian, "but if you sleep in your studio, sometime you *have* to. They all do. Just put your hat in here," and she glided before Cornelia through the studio door into one that opened beside it. The room was a dim and silent bedchamber, appointed with the faultless luxury that characterized the rest of the apartment. Cornelia had never dreamt of anything like it, but "*Don't* look at it!" Charmian pleaded. "I hate it, and I'm going to get into the studio to sleep as soon as I've thought out the kind of hangings. Well, we shall have to hurry back now," but she kept Cornelia while she critically rearranged a ribbon on her, and studied the effect of it over her shoulder in the glass. "Yes," she said, with a deep sigh of satisfaction, "perfectly

Roman! Gladys wouldn't have done for you. Cornelia was a step in the right direction; but it ought to have been Fulvia.

"'I should have clung to Fulvia's waist and thrust
The dagger through her side,'"

she chanted tragically; and she flung her arms about Cornelia for illustration. "*Dream of Fair Women*, you know. What part are you going to play, to-day?"

"What part?" Cornelia demanded, freeing herself, with her darkest frown of perplexity. "You're not going to have theatricals, I hope." She thought it was going pretty far to receive company Sunday afternoon, and if there was to be anything more she was ready to take her stand now.

Charmian gave a shout of laughter. "I wish we were. Then I could be *natural*. But I mean, what are you going to be: very gentle and mild and sweet and shrinking; or very philosophical and thoughtful; or very stately and cold and remote? You know you have to be *something*. Don't you always plan out the character you want them to think you?"

"No," said Cornelia, driven to her bluntest by the discomfort she felt at such a question, and the doubt it cast her into.

Charmion looked at her gloomily. "You strange creature!" she murmured. "But I love you," she added aloud. "I simply idolize you!"

Cornelia said, half-laughing, "Don't be ridiculous," and pulled herself out of the embrace which her devotee had thrown about her. But she could not help liking Charmian for seeming to like her so much.

XVIII.

They still had some time with Mrs. Maybough, when they went back to her before any one else came; Cornelia could see that her features were rather small and regular, and that her hair was that sort of elderly blond in color which makes people look younger than they are after they have passed a certain age. She was really well on in the thirties when she went out to Leadville to take charge of Charmian Maybough's education from the New England town where she had always lived, and ended by marrying Charmian's father. At that time Andrew Maybough had already made and lost several fortunes without great depravation from the immoralities of the process; he remained, as he had always been, a large, loosely good-natured, casual kind of creature, of whom it was a question whether he would not be buried by public subscription, in the end; but he died so opportunely that he left the widow of his second marriage with the income from a million dollars, which she was to share during her lifetime with the child of his first. Mrs.

Maybough went abroad with her step-daughter, and most of the girl's life had been spent in Europe.

There was a good deal of Dresden in their sojourn, something of Florence, necessarily a little of Paris; it was not altogether wanting in London, where Mrs. Maybough was presented at court. But so far as definitively materialized society was concerned, Europe could not be said to have availed. When she came back to her own country, it was without more than the hope that some society people, whom she had met abroad, might remember her.

"You'll see the greatest lot of frumps, if they ever do come," Charmian said to Cornelia, after her stepmother had made her excuses to Cornelia for her friends being rather late, "and I don't think they're half as uncertain to come as mamma does. Anyway, they're certain to stay, after they get here, till you want to rise up and howl."

"My dear!" said Mrs. Maybough.

"Oh, I don't suppose I ever *shall* howl. I'm too thoroughly subdued; and with Cornelia here to-day I shall be able to hold in. You're the first Synthesis girl," she frankly explained to Cornelia, "that mamma's ever let me have. She thinks they spend all their time drawing the nude."

Mrs. Maybough looked at Cornelia for the effect of this boldness upon her, and the girl frowned to keep herself from laughing, and then gave way. Mrs. Maybough smiled with a ladylike decorum which redeemed the excess from impropriety. Charmian seemed to know the bounds of her license, and as if Mrs. Maybough's smile had marked them, she went no farther, and her mother began softly to question Cornelia about herself. The girl perceived that Charmian had not told her anything quite right concerning her, but had got everything dramatically and picturesquely awry. She tried to keep Cornelia from setting the facts straight, because it took all the romance out of them, and she said she should always believe them as she had reported them. Cornelia knew from novels that they were very humble facts, but she was prepared to abide by them whatever a great society woman like Mrs. Maybough should think of them Mrs. Maybough seemed to think none the worse of them in the simple angularity which Cornelia gave them.

Her friends began to come in at last, and Cornelia found herself, for the first time, in a company of those modern nomads whom prosperity and the various forms of indigestion have multiplied among us. They

were mostly people whom Mrs. Maybough had met in Europe, drinking different waters and sampling divers climates, and they had lately arrived home, or were just going abroad, or to Florida, or Colorado, or California. The men were not so sick as the women, but they were prosperous, and that was as good or as bad a reason for their homelessness. They gradually withdrew from the ladies, and stirred their tea in groups of their own sex, and talked investments; sometimes they spoke of their diseases, or their hotels and steamers; and they took advice of each other about places to go to if they went in this direction or that, but said that, when it came to it they supposed they should go where their wives decided. The ladies spoke of where they had met last, and of some who had died since, or had got their daughters married; they professed a generous envy of Mrs. Maybough for being so nicely settled, and said that now they supposed she would always live in New York, unless, one of them archly suggested, her daughter should be carried off somewhere; if one had such a lovely daughter it was what one might expect to happen, any day.

XIX.

THE part that Charmian had chosen to represent must have been that of an Egyptian slave. She served her mother's guests with the tea that Cornelia poured, in attitudes of the eldest sculptures and mural paintings, and received their thanks and compliments with the passive impersonality of one whose hope in life had been taken away some time in the reign of Thotmes II. She did not at once relent from her self-sacrificial conception of herself, even under the flatteries of the nice little fellow who had decorated the apartment for Mrs. Maybough, and had come to drink a cup of tea in the environment of his own taste. Perhaps this was because he had been one of the first to note the peculiar type of Charmian's style and beauty, and she wished to keep him in mind of it. He did duty as youth and gayety beside the young ladies at their tea-urn, and when he learned that Cornelia was studying at the Synthesis, he professed a vivid interest and a great pleasure.

"I want Huntley to paint Miss Maybough," he said. "Don't you think he would do it tremendously well, Miss Saunders?"

"Miss Saunders is going to paint me," said Charmian, mystically.

"As soon as I get to the round," said Cornelia to Charmian; she was rather afraid to speak to the decorator. "I suppose you wouldn't want to be painted with block hands."

The decorator laughed, and Charmian asked, "Isn't she nice not to say anything about a block head? Very few Synthesis girls could have helped it; it's one of the oldest Synthesis jokes."

The young man smiled sympathetically, and said he was sure they would not keep Miss Saunders long at the block. "There's a friend of mine I should like to bring here, some day."

"Mamma would be glad to see him," said Charmian. "Who is it?"

Somebody began to sing: a full-bodiced lady, in a bonnet, and with an over-arching bust distended with chest-notes, which swelled and sank tumultuously to her music; her little tightly-gloved hands seemed of an earlier period. Cornelia lost the name which Mr. Plaisdell gave, in the first outburst, and caught nothing more of the talk which Charmian dropped, and then caught up again when the hand-clapping began.

Some of the people went, and others came, with

brief devoirs to Mrs. Maybough in the crepuscular corner where she sat. The tea circulated more and more; the babble rose and fell; it was all very curious to Cornelia, who had never seen anything like it before, and quite lost the sense of the day being Sunday. The stout lady's song had been serious, if not precisely devotional in character; but Cornelia could not have profited by the fact, for she did not know German. Mr. Plaisdell kept up his talk with Charmian, and she caught some words now and then that showed he was still speaking of his friend, or had recurred to him. "I'm rather dangerous when I get started on him. He's working out of his mannerisms into himself. He's a great fellow. I'm going to ask Mrs. Maybough." But he did not go at once. He drew nearer Cornelia, and tried to include her in the talk, but she was ashamed to find that she was difficult to get on common ground. She would not keep on talking Synthesis, as if that were the only thing she knew, but in fact she did not know much else in New York, even about art.

"Ah!" he broke off to Charmian, with a lift of his head. "That's *too* bad! There he comes now, with Wetmore!"

Cornelia looked toward Mrs. Maybough with him.

One gentleman was presenting another to Mrs. Maybough. They got through with her as quickly as most people did, and then they made their way toward Cornelia's table. She had just time to govern her head and hand into stony rigidity, when Wetmore came up with Ludlow, whom he introduced to Charmian. She was going to extend the acquaintance to Cornelia, but had no chance before Ludlow took Cornelia's petrified fingers and bowed over them. The men suppressed their surprise, if they had any, at this meeting as of old friends, but Charmian felt no obligation to silence.

"Where in the world have you met before? Why, Cornelia Saunders, why didn't you say you knew Mr. Ludlow?"

"I'm afraid I didn't give her time," Ludlow answered.

"Yes, but we were just speaking of you — Mr. Plaisdell was!" said Charmian, with the injury still in her voice.

"I didn't hear you speak of him," Cornelia said, with a vague flutter of her hands toward the teacups.

The action seemed to justify Wetmore to himself in saying, "Yes, thank you, I *will* have some tea, Miss Saunders, and then I'll get some one to introduce me to you. You haven't seen *me* before, and I can't

stand these airs of Ludlow's." He made them laugh, and Charmian introduced them, and Cornelia gave him his tea; then Charmian returned to her grievance and complained to Cornelia: "I thought you didn't know anybody in New York."

"Well, it seems you were not far wrong," Wetmore interposed. "I don't call Ludlow much of anybody."

"You don't often come down to anything as crude as that, Wetmore," Ludlow said.

"Not if I can help it. But I was driven to it, this time; the provocation was great."

"I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Saunders at home, several years ago," Ludlow said in obedience to Charmian. "We had some very delightful friends in commmon, there — old friends of mine — at Pymantoning."

"What a pretty name," said Mr. Plaisdell. "What a pity that none of our great cities happen to have those musical Indian names."

"Chicago," Wetmore suggested.

"Yes, Chicago is big, and the name is Indian; but is it pretty?"

"You can't have everything. I don't suppose it is very decorative."

"Pymantoning is as pretty as its name," said Ludlow. "It has the loveliness of a level, to begin with; we're so besotted with mountains in the East that we don't know how lovely a level is."

"The sea," Wetmore suggested again.

"Well, yes, that's occasionally level," Ludlow admitted. "But it hasn't got white houses with green blinds behind black ranks of maples in the moonlight."

"If 'good taste' could have had its way, the white house with green blinds would have been a thing of the past," said the decorator. "And they were a genuine instinct, an inspiration, with our people. The white paint is always beautiful, — as marble is. People tried to replace it with mud-color — the color of the ground the house was built on! I congratulate Miss Saunders on the conservatism of Py — ?"

"Pymantoning," said Cornelia, eager to contribute something to the talk, and then vexed to have it made much of by Mr. Plaisdell.

Wetmore was looking away. He floated lightly off, with the buoyancy which is sometimes the property of people of his bulk, and Ludlow remained talking with Charmian. Then, with what was like the insensible transition of dreams to her, he was talking with Cornelia. He said he had been meaning to come and see

her all the week past, but he had been out of town, and very busy, and he supposed she was occupied with looking about and getting settled. He did not make out a very clear case, she choose to think, and she was not sure but he was treating her still as a child, and she tried to think how she could make him realize that she was not. He seemed quite surprised to hear that she had been at work in the Synthesis ever since Tuesday. He complimented her energy, and asked, not how she was getting on there, but how she liked it; she answered stiffly, and she knew that he was ignoring her blunt behavior as something she could not help, and that vexed her the more; she wished to resist his friendliness because she did not deserve it. She kept seeing how handsome he was, with his brilliant brown beard, and his hazel eyes. There were points of sunny light in his eyes, when he smiled, and then his teeth shone very white. He did not smile very much; she liked his being serious and not making speeches; she wished she could do something to make him think her less of an auk, but when she tried, it was only worse. He did not say anything to let her think he had changed his mind as to the wisdom of her coming to study art in New York; and she liked that; she should have hated him if he had.

"Have you got that little Manet, yet?" Mr. Plaisdell broke in upon them. "I was telling Miss Maybough about it."

"Yes," said Ludlow. "It's at my place. Why won't Miss Maybough and Miss Saunders come and see it? You'll come, won't you, Miss Maybough?"

"If mamma will let me," said Charmian, meekly.

"Of course! Suppose we go ask her?"

The friends of Mrs. Maybough had now reduced themselves to Wetmore, who sat beside her, looking over at the little tea-table group. Ludlow led the rest toward her.

"What an imprudence," he called out, "when I'd just been booming you! Now you come up in person to spoil everything."

Ludlow presented his petition, and Mrs. Maybough received it with her provisional anxiety till he named the day for the visit. She said she had an engagement for Saturday afternoon, and Ludlow ventured, "Then perhaps you'd let the young ladies come with a friend of mine: Mrs. Westley. She'll be glad to call for them, I'm sure."

"Mrs. General Westley?"

"Yes."

"We met them in Rome," said Mrs. Maybough. "I

shall be very happy, indeed, for my daughter. But you know Miss Saunders — is not staying with us?"

"Miss Saunders will be very happy for herself," said Charmian.

The men took their leave, and Charmian seized the first moment to breathe in Cornelia's ear: "Oh, what luck! I didn't suppose he *would* do it, when I got Mr. Plaisdell to hint about that Manet. And it's all for you. Now come into my room and tell me everything about it. You have got to stay for dinner."

"No, no; I can't," Cornelia gasped. "And I'm not going to his studio. He asked me because he had to."

"I should think he did *have* to. He talked to you as if there was no one else here. How *did* you meet him before? *When* did you?" She could not wait for Cornelia to say, but broke out with fresh astonishment. "Why, Walter Ludlow! Do you know who Walter *Ludlow* is? He's one of the greatest painters in New York. He's the greatest!"

"Who is Mr. Wetmore?" Cornelia asked evasively.

"Don't name him in the same century! He's grand, too! Does those little Meissonier things. He's going to paint mamma. She's one of his types. He must have brought Mr. Ludlow to see me. But he

didn't. He saw nobody but you! Oh Cornelia!" She caught Cornelia in her arms.

"Don't be a goose!" said Cornelia, struggling to get away.

"Will you tell me all about it, then?"

"Yes. But it isn't anything."

At the end of the story Charmian sighed, "How romantic! Of course, he's simply in a frenzy till he sees you again. I don't believe he can live through the week."

"He'll have to live through several," said Cornelia; "You can excuse me when you go. He's very conceited, and he talks to you as if he were a thousand years old. I think Mr. Plaisdell is a great deal nicer. He doesn't treat you as if you were — I don't know what!"

XX.

THE next day Cornelia found herself the object of rumors that filled the Synthesis. She knew that they all came from Charmian, and that she could not hope to overtake them with denial. The ridiculous romances multiplied themselves, and those who did not understand that Cornelia and Ludlow had grown up together in the same place, or were first cousins, had been encouraged to believe that they were old lovers, who had quarrelled, and never spoken till they happened to meet at Mrs. Maybough's. Ludlow was noted for a certain reticence and austerity with women, which might well have come from an unhappy love-affair; once when he took one of the instructor's classes at the Synthesis temporarily, his forbidding urbanity was so glacial, that the girls scarcely dared to breathe in his presence, and left it half-frozen. The severest of the masters, with all his sarcasm, was simply nothing to him.

Cornelia liked to hear that. She should have despised Ludlow if she had heard he was silly with

girls, and she did not wish to despise him, though she knew that he despised her; she could bear that. The Synthesis praises made her the more determined, however, to judge his recent work when she came to see it, just as she would judge any one's work. But first of all she meant not to see it.

She seemed to have more trouble in bringing herself back to this point than in keeping Charmian to it. Charmian came to believe her at last, after declaring it the rudest thing she ever heard of, and asking Cornelia what she expected to say to Mrs. Westley when she came for her. Cornelia could never quite believe it herself, though she strengthened her purpose with repeated affirmation, tacit and explicit, and said it would be very easy to tell Mrs. Westley she was not going, if she ever did come for her. She could not keep Charmian from referring the case to every one on the steps and window-sills in the Synthesis, and at the sketch-class, where Charmian published it the first time Cornelia came, and wove a romance from it which involved herself as the close friend and witness of so strange a being.

Cornelia tried not to let all this interfere with her work, but it did, and at the sketch-class where she might have shown some rebound from the servile

work of the Preparatory, and some originality, she disappointed those whom Charmian had taught to expect anything of her. They took her rustic hauteur and her professed indifference to the distinction of Ludlow's invitation, as her pose. She went home from the class vexed to tears by her failure, and puzzled to know what she really should say to that Mrs. Westley when she came; it wouldn't be so easy to tell her she was not going, after all. Cornelia hated her, and wished she would not come; she had let the whole week go by, now, till Thursday, and perhaps she really would not come. The girl knew so little of the rigidity of city dates that she thought very likely Mrs. Westley had decided to put it off till another week.

She let herself into her boarding-house with her latch-key and stood confronted in the hall with Ludlow, who was giving some charge to the maid. "Oh, Miss Saunders," he said, and he put the card he held into his pocket, "I'm so glad not to miss you; I was just leaving a written message, but now I can tell you."

He hesitated, and Cornelia did not know what to do. But she said, "Won't you come in?" with a vague movement toward the parlor.

"Why, yes, thank you, for a moment," he said; and he went back with her.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting," she said, with a severity which was for her own awkwardness.

He did not take it for himself. "Oh, no! I've just come from Mrs. Westley's, and she's charged me with a message for you." He handed Cornelia a note. "She will call for you and Miss Maybough at the Synthesis rather earlier than you usually leave work, I believe, but I want you to have some daylight on my Manet. I hope half-past two won't be too early?"

"Oh, no," said Cornelia, and while she wondered how she could make this opening of assent turn to refusal in the end, Ludlow went on:

"There's something of my own, that I'd like to have you look at. Of course, you won't get away with the Manet, alone; I don't suppose you expected that. I've an idea you can tell me where I've gone wrong, if I have; it's all a great while ago. Have you ever been at the County Fair at Pymantoning since" —

He stopped, and Cornelia perceived that it was with doubt whether it might not still be a tender point with her.

"Oh, yes, I've forgiven the Fair long ago." She laughed, and he laughed with her.

"It's best not to keep a grudge against a defeat, I suppose. If we do, it won't help us. I've had my quarrel with the Pymantoning County Fair, too; but it wasn't with the Fine Arts Committee."

"No, I didn't suppose you wanted to exhibit anything there," said Cornelia.

"Why, I don't know. It might be a very good thing for me. Why not? I'd like to exhibit this very picture there. It's an impression — not just what I'd do, now — of the trotting-match I saw there that day."

"Yes," said Cornelia, letting her eyes fall, "Mrs. Burton said you had painted it, or you were going to."

"Well, I did," said Ludlow, "and nobody seemed to know what I was after. I wonder if they would in Pymantoning! But what I wanted to ask was that you would try to look at it from the Pymantoning point of view. I hope you haven't lost that yet?"

"Well, I haven't been away such a great while," said Cornelia, smiling.

"No; but still, one sophisticates in New York very soon. I'll tell you what I've got a notion of! Well, it's all very much in the air, yet, but so far as I've thought it out, it's the relation of our art to our life. It sounds rather boring, I know, and I suppose I'm a

bit of a theorist; I always was. It's easy enough to prove to the few that our life is full of poetry and picturesqueness; but can I prove it to the many? Can the people themselves be made to see it and feel it? That's the question. Can they be interested in a picture — a real work of art that asserts itself in a good way? Can they be taught to care for my impression of the trotting-match at the Pymantoning County Fair, as much as they would for a chromo of the same thing, and be made to feel that there was something more in it perhaps?"

He sat fronting her, with his head down over the hat he held between his hands; now he lifted his face and looked into hers. She smiled at his earnestness, and for a little instant felt herself older and wiser in her practicality.

"You might send it out to the next County Fair, and see."

"Why, that's just what I thought of!" he said, and he laughed. "Do you suppose they would let me exhibit it in the Fine Arts Department?"

"I don't believe they would give you the first premium," said Cornelia.

"Well, well, then I should have to put up with the second! I should like to get the first, I confess,"

Ludlow went on seriously. "The premium would mean something to me — not so much, of course, as a popular recognition. What do you think the chance of that would be?"

"Well, I haven't seen the picture yet," Cornelia suggested.

"Ah, that's true! I forgot that," he said, and they both laughed. "But what do you think of my theory? It seems to me," and now he leaned back in his chair, and smiled upon her with that bright earnestness which women always found charming in him, "it seems to me that the worst effect of an artist's life is to wrap him up in himself, and separate him from his kind. Even if he goes in for what they call popular subjects, he takes from the many and gives to the few; he ought to give something back to the crowd — he ought to give everything back. But the terrible question is whether they'll have it; and he has no means of finding out."

"And you've come to one of the crowd to inquire?" Cornelia asked. Up to that moment she had been flattered, too, by his serious appeal to her, and generously pleased. But the chance offered, and she perversely seized it.

He protested with a simple "Ah!" and she was ashamed.

"I don't know," she hurried on to say. "I never thought about it in that way."

"Well, it isn't so simple any more, after you once begin. I don't suppose I shall be at peace quite till I try what I can do; and seeing you Sunday brought Pymantoning all so freshly back, that I've been wondering, from time to time, ever since, whether you could possibly help me."

"I will try, as the good little boy said," Cornelia assented.

"It makes me feel like a good little boy to have asked it." Ludlow did not profit by the chance which the conclusion of their agreement offered him, to go. He stayed and talked on, and from time to time he recurred to what he had asked, and said he was afraid she would think he was using her, and tried to explain that he really was not, but was approaching her most humbly for her opinion. He could not make it out, but they got better and better acquainted in the fun they had with his failures. It went on till Cornelia said, "Now, really, if you keep it up, I shall have to stand you in the corner, with your face to the wall."

"Oh, do!" he entreated. "It would be such a relief."

"You know I *was* a teacher two winters," she said, "and have actually stood boys in corners."

That seemed to interest him afresh; he made her tell him all about her school-teaching. He stayed till the bell rang for dinner, and he suffered a decent moment to pass before he rose then.

"After all," he said at parting, "I think you'd better decide that it's merely my Manet you're coming to see."

"Yes, merely the Manet," Cornelia assented. "If I choose, the Ludlows will all be stood in the corners with their faces to the wall."

She found her own face very flushed, when she climbed up to her room for a moment before going in to dinner, and her heart seemed to be beating in her neck. She looked at Mrs. Westley's note. It stated everything so explicitly that she did not see why Mr. Ludlow need have come to explain. She remembered now that she had forgotten to tell him she was not going.

XXI.

CORNELIA thought Mrs. Westley would come for Charmian and herself in her carriage; but when they went down to her in the Synthesis office, they found that she had planned to walk with them to Ludlow's studio. She said it was not a great way off; and she had got into the habit of walking there, when he was painting her; she supposed they would rather walk after their work. Cornelia said "Oh, yes," and Charmian asked, at her perfervidest, Had Mr. Ludlow painted *her?* and Mrs. Westley answered calmly, Yes; she believed he did not think it very successful; her husband liked it, though. Charmian said, Oh, how much she should like to see it, and Mrs. Westley said she must show it her some time. Cornelia thought Mrs. Westley very pretty, but she decided that she did not care to see Ludlow's picture of her.

His studio stood a little back from the sidewalk; it was approached by a broad sloping pavement, and had two wide valves for the doorway. He opened the door himself, at their ring, and they found themselves in

a large, gray room which went to the roof, with its vaulted ceiling; this was pierced with a vast window, that descended half-way down the northward wall. "My studio started in life as a gentleman's stable; then it fell into the hands of a sculptor, and then it got as low as a painter." He said to Charmian, "Mr. Plaisdell has told me how ingeniously you treated one of your rooms that you took for a studio."

Charmian answered with dark humility, "But a studio without a painter in it!" and there were some offers and refusals of compliment between them, which ended in his saying that he would like to see her studio, and her saying that Mrs. Maybough would always be glad to see him. Then he talked with Mrs. Westley, who was very pleasant to Cornelia while the banter with Charmian went on, and proposed to show his pictures; he fancied that was what he had got them there, for; but he would make a decent pretence of the Manet, first.

The Manet was one of that painter's most excessive; it was almost insolent in its defiance of the old theory and method of art. "He had to go too far, in those days, or he wouldn't have arrived anywhere," Ludlow said, dreamily, as he stood looking with them at the picture. "He fell back to the point

he had really meant to reach." He put the picture away amidst the sighs and murmurs of Mrs. Westley and Charmian, and the silence of Cornelia, which he did not try to break. He began to show his own pictures, taking them at random, as it seemed, from the ranks of canvasses faced against the wall. "You know we impressionists are nothing if not prolific," he said, and he kept turning the frame on his easel, now for a long picture, and now for a tall one. The praises of the others followed him, but Cornelia could not speak. Some of the pictures she did not like; some she thought were preposterous; but there were some that she found brilliantly successful, and a few that charmed her with their delicate and tender poetry. He said something about most of them, in apology or extenuation; Cornelia believed that she knew which he liked by his not saying anything of them.

Suddenly he set a large picture on the easel that quite filled the frame. "Trotting Match at the Pymantoning County Fair," he announced, and he turned away and began to make tea in a little battered copper kettle over a spirit-lamp, on a table strewn with color-tubes in the corner.

"Ah, yes," said Mrs. Westley. "I remember this at the American Artists; three or four years ago,

wasn't it? But you've done something to it, haven't you?"

"Improved with age," said Ludlow, with his back toward them, bent above his tea-kettle. "That's all."

"It seems like painting a weed, though," said Charmian. "How can you care for such subjects?"

Ludlow came up to her with the first cup of tea. "It's no use to paint lilies, you know."

"Do you call that an answer?"

"A poor one."

He brought Mrs. Westley some tea, and then he came to Cornelia with a cup in each hand, one for her, and one for himself, and frankly put himself between her and the others. "Well, what do you think of it?" he asked, as if there were no one else but they two.

She felt a warm flush of pleasure in his boldness. "I don't know. It's like it; that's the way I've always seen it; and it's beautiful. But somehow"—

"What?"

"It looks as if it were somewhere else."

"You've hit it," said Ludlow. "It serves me right. You see I was so anxious to prove that an American subject was just as susceptible of impres-

sionistic treatment as a French one, that I made this look as French as I could. I must do it again and more modestly; not be so patronizing. I should like to come out there next fall again, and see another trotting-match. I suppose they'll have one?"

"They always have them; it wouldn't be the Fair without them," said Cornelia.

"Well, I must come, and somehow do it on the spot; that's the only way." He pulled himself more directly in front of her and ignored the others, who talked about his picture with faded interest to each other, and then went about, and looked at the objects in the studio. "I don't think I made myself quite clear the other day, about what I wanted to do in this way." He plunged into the affair again, and if Cornelia did not understand it better, it was not for want of explanation. Perhaps she did not listen very closely. All the time she thought how brilliantly handsome he was, and how fine, by every worldly criterion. "Yes," he said, "that is something I have been thinking of ever since my picture failed with the public; it deserved to fail, and you've made it so clear why, that I can't refuse to know, or to keep myself in the dark about it any longer. I don't believe we can take much from the common stock of life in any way,

and find the thing at all real in our hands, without intending to give something back. Do you?"

Cornelia had never thought about it before; she did not try to pretend that she had; it seemed a little fantastic to her, but it flattered her to have him talk to her about it, and she liked his seriousness. He did not keep up the kind of banter with her that he did with Charmian; he did not pay her compliments, and she hated compliments from men.

Ludlow went off to speak to Mrs. Westley of something he saw her looking at; Charmian edged nearer to Cornelia. "I would give the world to be in your place. I never saw anything like it. Keep on looking just as you are! It's magnificent. Such color, and that queenly pose of the head! It would kill those Synthesis girls if they knew how he had been talking to you. My, if I could get anybody to be serious with *me!* Talk! Say something! *Do you think it's going to rain before we get home?* His eyes keep turning this way, all the time; you can't see them, but they do. *I am glad I brought my umbrella. Have you got your waterproof?* I'm going to make you tell me every word he said when he came to see you yesterday; it'll be mean if you don't. *No, I think I shall go up by the elevated, and then take the surface-*

car across. It's the most romantic thing I ever heard of. *No, I don't believe it will be dark.* Speak! Say something! You mustn't let me do all the talking; he'll notice."

Cornelia began to laugh, and Charmian turned away and joined Mrs. Westley and Ludlow, who were tilting outward some of the canvasses faced against the wall, and talking them over. Cornelia followed her, and they all four loitered over the paintings, luxuriously giving a glance at each, and saying a word or two about it. "Yes," Ludlow said, "sometimes I used to do three or four of them a day. I work more slowly now; if you want to get any thinking in, you've got to take time to it."

It was growing dark; Ludlow proposed to see them all home one after another. Mrs. Westley said no, indeed; the Broadway car, at the end of the second block, would leave her within three minutes of her door.

"And nothing could happen in three minutes," said Ludlow. "That stands to reason."

"And *my* one luxury is going home alone," said Charmian. "Mamma doesn't allow it, except to and from the Synthesis. Then I'm an art student and perfectly safe. If I were a young lady my life wouldn't be worth anything."

"Yes," Ludlow assented, "the great thing is to have some sort of business to be where you are."

"I know a girl who's in some of the charities, and she goes about at all hours of the night, and nobody speaks to her," said Charmian.

"Well, then," said Ludlow, "I don't see that there's anything for me to do, unless we all go together with Mrs. Wesley to get her Broadway car, and then keep on to the Elevated with you, Miss Maybough. Miss Saunders may be frightened enough then to let me walk to her door with her. A man likes to be of some little use in the world."

They had some mild fun about the weakness of Cornelia in needing an escort. She found it best to own that she did not quite know her way home, and was afraid to ask if she got puzzled.

Ludlow put out his spirit-lamp, which had been burning blue all the time, and embittering the tea in the kettle over it, and then they carried out their plan. Cornelia went before with Mrs. Westley, who asked her to come to her on her day, whenever she could leave her work for such a reckless dissipation. At the foot of the Elevated station stairs, where Charmian inflexibly required that they should part with her, in the interest of the personal liberty which she prized

above personal safety, she embraced Cornelia formally, and then added an embrace of a more specific character, and whispered to her ear, "You're glorious!" and fled up the station stairs.

Cornelia understood that she was glorious because Mr. Ludlow was walking home with her, and that Charmian was giving the fact a significance out of all reason. They talked rather soberly, as two people do when a gayer third has left them, and they had little silences. They spoke of Charmian, and Cornelia praised her beauty and her heart, and said how everybody liked her at the Synthesis.

"Do they laugh at her a little, too?" Ludlow asked.

"Why?"

"She's rather romantic."

"Oh, I thought all girls were romantic."

"Yes? You're not."

"What makes you think so?" asked the girl. "I'm a great deal more romantic than is good for me. Don't you like romantic people? I do!"

"I don't believe I do," said Ludlow. "They're rather apt to make trouble. I don't mean Miss Maybough. She'll probably take it out in madly impossible art. Can she draw?"

Cornelia did not like to say what she thought of Charmian's drawing, exactly. She said, "Well, I don't know."

Ludlow hastened to say, "I oughtn't to have asked that about your friend."

"We're both in the Preparatory, you know," Cornelia explained. "I think Charmian has a great deal of imagination."

"Well, that's a good thing, if it doesn't go too far. Fortunately it can't, in the Preparatory."

At her door Cornelia did not know whether to ask him in, as she would have done in Pymantoning; she ended by not even offering him her hand; but he took it all the same, as if he had expected her to offer it.

XXII.

CORNELIA found herself in her room without knowing how she got there, or how long she had been there, when the man-voiced Irish girl came up and said something to her. She did not understand at first; then she made out that there was a gentleman asking for her in the parlor; and with a glance at her face in the glass, she ran down stairs. She knew it was Ludlow, and that he had thought of something he wanted to say, and had come back. It must be something very important; it might be an invitation to go with him somewhere; she wondered if they would have a chaperone.

In the vague light of the long parlor, where a single burner was turned half up, because it was not yet dark outside, a figure rose from one of the sofas and came toward her with one hand extended in gay and even jocose greeting. It was the figure of a young man, with a high forehead, and with nothing to obstruct the view of the Shakespearian dome it mounted into, except a modest growth of hair above

either ear. He was light upon his feet, and he advanced with a rhythmical step. Cornelia tried to make believe that she did not know who it was; she recoiled, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and she could not gainsay him when he demanded joyfully, "Why, Nic! Why, Nelie! Don't you remember me? Dickerson, J. B., with Gates & Clarkson, art goods? Pymantoning? Days of yore, generally? Oh, pshaw, now!"

"Yes, I remember you," said Cornelia, in a voice as cold as the finger-tips which she inwardly raged to think she gave him, but was helpless to refuse, simply because he was holding out his hand to her.

"Well, it's good for sore eyes to see you again," said Mr. Dickerson, closing both of his hands on hers. "Let's see; it's four years ago! How the time flies! I declare, it don't hardly seem a day. Mustn't tell you how you've grown, I suppose? Well, we *weren't* much more than children, then, anyhow. Set down! I'm at home here. Old stamping-ground of mine, when I'm in New York; our house has its headquarters in New York, now; everything's got to come, sooner or later. Well, it's a great place."

Cornelia obeyed him for the same reason that she gave him her hand, which was no reason. "I heard

your voice there at the door, when you came in a little while ago, and I was just going to rush out and speak to you. I was sure it was you; but thinks I, 'It can't be; it's too good to be true'; and I waited till I could see Mrs. Montgomery, and then I sent up for you. Didn't send my name; thought I'd like to surprise you. Well, how's the folks? Mother still doing business at the old stand? Living and well, I hope?"

"My mother is well," said Cornelia. She wondered how she should rid herself of this horrible little creature, who grew, as she looked at him in her fascination, more abominable to her every moment. She was without any definite purpose in asking, "How is Mrs. Dickerson?"

The question appeared to give Mr. Dickerson great satisfaction; he laughed, throwing back his head: "Who, Tweet? Well, I thought you'd be after me there, about the first thing! I don't blame you; don't blame you a bit. Be just so myself, if I was in your place! Perfectly natural you should! Then you ain't heard?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Cornelia, with mounting aversion. She edged away from him, for in the expression of his agreeable emotion he had pushed nearer to her on the sofa.

"Why, Tweet is Mrs. Byers, now; court let her take back her maiden name. I didn't oppose the divorce; nothing like peace in families, you know. Tweet was all right, and I hain't got anything to say against her. *She's* a good girl; but we couldn't seem to hit it off, and we agreed to quit, after we'd tried it a couple of years or so, and I've been a free man ever since."

It could not be honestly said that Cornelia was profoundly revolted by the facts so lightly, almost gaily, presented. Her innocence of so much that they implied, and her familiarity with divorce as a common incident of life, alike protected her from the shock. But what really struck terror to her heart was something that she realized with the look that the hideous little man now bent upon her: the mutual understanding; the rights once relinquished which might now be urged again; the memory of things past, were all suggested in this look. She thought of Ludlow, with his lofty ideals and his great gifts, and then she looked at this little grinning, leering wretch, and remembered how he had once put his arm round her and kissed her. It seemed impossible — too cruel and unjust to be. She was scarcely more than a child, then, and that foolish affair had been more her mother's folly than her own.

It flashed upon her that unless she put away the shame of it, the shame would weaken her and master her. But how to assert herself she did not know till he gave her some pretext.

"Well," he sighed, rolling his head against the back of the sofa, and looking up at the chandelier, "sometimes a man has more freedom than he's got any use for. I don't know as I want to be back under Tweet's thumb, but I guess the Scripture was about right where it says it ain't good for a man to be alone. When d'you leave Pymantoning, Nelie?"

"It makes no difference when I left." Cornelia got to her feet, trembling. "And I'll thank you not to call me by my first name, Mr. Dickerson. I don't know why you should do it, and I don't like it."

"Oh, all right, all right," said Mr. Dickerson. "I don't blame you. I think you're perfectly excusable to feel the way you do. But some time, when I get a chance, I should like to tell you about it, and put it to you in the right light" —

"I don't want to hear about it," cried Cornelia fiercely. "And I won't have you thinking that it's because I ever did care for you. I didn't. And I was only too glad when you got married. And I don't hate you, for I despise you too much; and I always did. So!"

She stamped her foot for a final emphasis, but she was aware of her words all having fallen effectless, like blows dealt some detestable thing in a dream.

"Good! Just what I expected and deserved," said Mr. Dickerson, with a magnanimity that was appalling. "I did behave like a perfect scallawag to you, Nic; but I was young then, and Tweet got round me before I knew. I can explain"—

"I don't want you to explain! I won't let you. You're too disgusting for anything. Don't I tell you I *never* cared for you?"

"Why, of course," said Mr. Dickerson tolerantly, "you say that now; and I don't blame you. But *I* guess you *did* care, once, Nelie."

"Oh, my goodness, what shall I do?" She found herself appealing in some sort to the little wretch against himself.

"Why, let's see how you look; I hain't had a fair peep at you, yet." As if with the notion of affording a relief to the strain of the situation, he advanced, and lifted his hand toward the low-burning chandelier.

"Stop!" cried Cornelia. "Are you staying here — in this house?"

"Well, I inferred that I was, from a remark that I made."

"Then I'm going away instantly. I will tell Mrs. Montgomery, and I will go to-night."

"Why, Nic!"

"Hush! Don't you — don't dare to speak to me! Oh, you — you" — She could not find a word that would express all her loathing of him, and her scorn of herself in the past for having given him the hold upon her that nothing appeared to have loosed. She was putting on a bold front, and she meant to keep her word, but if she left that house, she did not know where, in the whole vast city, she should go. Of course she could go to Charmian Maybough; but besides being afraid to venture out after dark, she knew she would have to tell Charmian all about it; or else make a mystery of it; there was nothing, probably, that Charmian would have liked better, but there was nothing that Cornelia would have liked less. She wanted to cry; it always seems hard and very unjust to us, in after life, when some error or folly of our youth rises up to perplex us; and Cornelia was all the more rebellious because the fault was not wholly hers, or not even largely, but mostly her dear, innocent, unwise mother's.

Mr. Dickerson dropped his hand without turning up the gas; perhaps he did not need a stronger light on

Cornelia, after all. "Oh, well! I don't want to drive you out of the house. I'll go. I've got my grip out here in the hall. But see here! I told Mrs. Montgomery we hailed from the same place — children together, and I don't know but what cousins — and how glad I was to find you here, and now if I leave — Better let me stay here, over night, anyhow! I'm off on the road to-morrow, anyway. I won't trouble you; I won't, indeed. Now you can depend upon it. Word's as good as my bond, if my bond *ain't* worth a great deal. But, honor bright!"

Cornelia's heart, which stood still at the threat she made, began to pound in her breast. She panted so that she could hardly speak.

"Will you call me by my first name?" she demanded.

"No. You shall be Miss Saunders to me till you say when."

"And will you ever speak to me, or look at me, as if we were ever anything but the most perfect strangers?"

"It'll be a good deal of a discount from what I told Mrs. Montgomery, but I guess I shall have to promise."

"And you will go in the morning?"

"Sure."

"How soon?"

"Well, I don't like a *very* early breakfast, but I guess I can get out of the house by about nine, or half-past eight, maybe."

"Then you may stay." Cornelia turned and marched out of the parlor with a state that failed her more and more, the higher she mounted toward her room. If it had been a flight further she would have had to crawl on her hands and knees.

At first she thought she would not go down to dinner, but after a while she found herself very hungry, and she decided she must go for appearance sake at any rate. At the bottom of her heart, too, she was curious to see whether that little wretch would keep his word.

He was the life of the table. His jokes made everybody laugh; it could be seen that he was a prime favorite with the landlady. After the coffee came he played a great many tricks with knives and forks and spoons, and coins. He dressed one of his hands, all but two fingers, with a napkin which he made like the skirts of a ballet-dancer, and then made his fingers dance a hornpipe. He tried a skirt-dance with them later, but it was comparatively a failure, for want of practice, he said.

Toward Cornelia he behaved with the most scrupulous deference, even with delicacy, as if they had indeed met in former days, but as if she were a person of such dignity and consequence that their acquaintance could only have been of the most formal character. He did it so well, and seemed to take such a pleasure in doing it that she blushed for him. Some of the things he said to the others were so droll that she had to laugh at them. But he did not presume upon her tolerance.

XXIII.

THE false courage that supported her in Dickerson's presence left Cornelia when she went back to her room, and she did not sleep that night, or she thought she did not. She came down early for a cup of coffee, and the landlady told her that Mr. Dickerson had just gone; he wished Mrs. Montgomery to give Cornelia his respects, and apologize for his going away without waiting to see her again. He had really expected to stay over till Monday, but he found he could save several days by taking the Chicago Limited that morning. Mrs. Montgomery praised his energy; she did not believe he would be on the road a great while longer; he would be in the firm in less than another year. She hinted at his past unhappiness in the married state, and she said she did hope that he would get somebody who would appreciate him, next time. There did not seem to be any doubt in her mind that there would be a next time with him.

Cornelia wanted to ask whether she expected him back soon; she could not; but she resolved that

whenever he came he should not find her in that house. She thought where she should go, and what excuse she should make for going, what she should tell Charmian, or Mr. Ludlow, if she ever saw him again. It seemed to her that she had better go home, but Cornelia hated to give up; she could not bear to be driven away. She went to church, to escape herself, and a turmoil of things alien to the place and the hour whirled through her mind during the service; she came out spent with a thousand-fold dramatization of her relations to Mr. Dickerson and to Mr. Ludlow. She sat down on a bench in the little park before the church, and tried to think what she ought to do, while the children ran up and down the walks, and the people from the neighboring East Side avenues, in their poor Sunday best, swarmed in the square for the mild sun and air of the late October. The street cars dinned ceaselessly up and down, and back and forth; the trains of the Elevated hurtled by on the west and on the east; the troubled city roared all round with the anguish of the perpetual coming and going; but it was as much Sunday there as it would have been on the back street in Pymantoning where her mother's little house stood. The leaves that dripped down at her feet in the light warm breaths of wind passing

over the square might have fallen from the maple before the gate at home. The awful unity of life for the first time appeared to her. Was it true that you could not get away from what you had been? Was that the meaning of that little wretch's coming back to claim her after he had forfeited every shadow of right to her that even her mother's ignorance and folly had given him? Then it meant that he would come back again and again, and never stop coming. She made believe that if she looked up, she should now see him actually coming down the path toward her; she held her eyes fixed upon the ground at her feet, and then it seemed to her every moment that he was just going to take the seat next her. The seat was already taken; a heavy German woman filled it so solidly that no phantasm could have squeezed in beside her. But the presence of Dickerson became so veritable that Cornelia started up breathless, and hurried home, sick with the fear that she should find him waiting for her there.

She was afraid to go out the next morning, lest she should meet him on the street, though she knew that by this time he was a thousand miles away.

At the Synthesis she was ashamed to let Charmian think that her absent and tremulous mood had some-

thing to do with Ludlow; but she was so much more ashamed of the shabby truth that she would have been willing to accept the romance herself. This was very dishonest; it was very wicked and foolish; Cornelia saw herself becoming a guilty accomplice in an innocent illusion. She found strength to silence Charmian's surmise, if not to undeceive her; she did her best; and as the days began to remove her farther and farther from the moment of her actual encounter with Dickerson, her reason came more and more into control of her conscience. She tried not to be the fool of a useless remorse for something she was at least not mainly to blame for. She had to make the struggle alone; there was no one she could advise with; her heart shut when she thought of telling any one her trouble; but in her perpetual reveries she argued the case before Ludlow.

It seemed to her as if he had come to render her a final judgment when his name was sent up to her room, that Saturday afternoon which ended the longest week of her life. She went down, and found him alone in the long parlor, and it was in keeping with her fantastic prepossession that he should begin, "I wonder how I shall say what I've come for?" as if he would fain have softened her sentence.

He kept her hand a moment longer than he need; but he was not one of those disgusting people who hold your hand while they talk to you, and whom Cornelia hated. She did not now resent it, though she was sensible of having to take her hand from him.

"I don't know," she answered, with hysterical flippancy. "If I did I would tell you."

He laughed, as if he liked her flippancy, and he said, "It's very simple. In fact, that's what makes it so difficult."

"Then you might practice on something hard first," she suggested wildly. "How would the weather do?"

"Yes, hasn't it been beautiful?" said Ludlow, with an involuntary lapse into earnestness. "I was in the Park to-day for a little effect I wanted to get, and it was heartbreaking to leave the woods. I was away up in those forest depths that look wild in spite of the asphalt. If you haven't been there, you must go some day while the autumn color lasts. I saw a lot of your Synthesis ladies painting there. I didn't know but I might see you."

This was all very matter of fact. Cornelia took herself in hand, and shook herself out of her hallucination. "No, I don't suppose it would be right for a person who was merely in the Preparatory to go

sketching in the Park. And Charmian and I were very good to-day, and kept working away at our block hands as long as the light lasted."

"Ah, yes; Miss Maybough," said Ludlow; then he paused absently a moment. "Do you think she is going to do much in art?"

"How should I know?" returned Cornelia. She thought it rather odd he should recur to that after she had let him see she did not want to talk about Charmian's art.

"Because you know that you can do something yourself," said Ludlow. "That is the only kind of people who can really know. The other sort of people can make clever guesses; they can't know."

"And you believe that I can do something?" asked Cornelia, and a sudden revulsion of feeling sent the tears to her eyes. It was so sweet to be praised, believed in, after what she had been through. "But you haven't seen anything of mine except those things — in the Fair House."

"Oh, yes, I have. I've seen the drawings you submitted at the Synthesis. I've just seen them. I may as well confess it: I asked to see them."

"You did! And — and — well?" she fluttered back.

"It will take hard work."

"Oh, I know that!"

"And it will take time."

"Yes, that is the worst of it. I don't see how I can give the time."

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh, because — I can't very well be away from home." She colored as she said this, for she could have been away from home well enough if she had the money. "I thought I would come and try it for one winter."

He said lightly, "Perhaps you'll get so much interested that you'll find you can take more time."

"I don't know," she answered.

"Well, then, you must get in all the work you can this winter. Block hands are well enough, but they're not the whole of art nor the whole preparation for it."

"Oh, I've joined the sketch class," she said.

"Yes, that's well enough, too," he assented. "But I want you to come and paint with me," he suddenly added.

"You? Me?" she gasped.

"Yes," he returned. "I'll tell you what I mean. I've been asked to paint a lady. She'll have to come to my place, and I want you to come with her, and

see what you can do, too. I hope it doesn't seem too extraordinary?" he broke off, at sight of the color in her face.

"Oh, no," said Cornelia. She wondered what Charmian would say if she knew this; she wondered what the Synthesis would say; the Synthesis held Mr. Ludlow in only less honor than the regular Synthesis instructors, and Mr. Ludlow had asked her to come and paint with him! She took shelter in the belief that Mrs. Burton must have put him up to it, somehow, but she ought to say something grateful, or at least something. She found herself stupidly and aimlessly asking, "Is it Mrs. Westley?" as if that had anything to do with the matter.

"No; I don't see why I didn't tell you at once," said Ludlow. "It's your friend, Miss Maybough."

Cornelia relieved her nerves with a laugh. "I wonder how she ever kept from telling it."

"Perhaps she didn't know. I've only just got a letter from her mother, asking me to paint her, and I haven't decided yet that I shall do it."

She thought that he wanted her to ask him why, and she asked, "What are you waiting for?"

"For two reasons. Do you want the real reason first?" he asked, smiling at her.

She laughed. "No, the unreal one!"

"Well, I doubt whether Mrs. Maybough wrote to me of her own inspiration, entirely. I suspect that Wetmore and Plaisdell have been working the affair, and I don't like that."

"Well?"

"And I'm waiting for you to say whether I could do it. That's the real reason."

"How should I know?"

"I could make a picture of her," he said, "but could I make a portrait? There is something in every one which holds the true likeness; if you don't get at that, you don't make a portrait, and you don't give people their money's worth. They haven't proposed to buy merely a picture of you; they've proposed to buy a picture of a certain person; you may give them more, but you can't honestly give them less; and if you don't think you can give them that, then you had better not try. I should like to try for Miss Maybough's likeness, and I'll do that, at least, if you'll try with me. The question is whether you would like to."

"Like to? It's the greatest opportunity! Why, I hope I know what a chance it is, and I don't know why you ask me to."

"I want to learn of you."

"If you talk that way I shall know you are making fun of me."

"Then I will talk some other way. I mean what I say. I want you to show me how to look at Miss Maybough. It sounds fantastic" —

"It sounds ridiculous. I shall not do anything of the kind."

"Very well, then, I shall not paint her."

"You don't expect me to believe that," said Cornelia, but she did believe it a little, and she was daunted. She said, "Charmian would hate it."

"I don't believe she would," said Ludlow. "I don't think she would mind being painted by half-a-dozen people at once. The more the better."

"That shows you don't understand her," Cornelia began.

"Didn't I tell you I didn't understand her? Now, you see, you must. I should have overdone that trait in her. Of course there is something better than that."

"I don't see how you could propose my painting her, too," Cornelia relented, provisionally.

Ludlow was daunted in his turn; he had not thought of that. It would be a little embarrassing, certainly,

but he could not quite own this. He laughed and said, "I have a notion she will propose it herself, if you give her a chance."

"Oh," said Cornelia, "if she does that, all well and good."

"Then I may say to her mother that I will make a try at the portrait?"

"What have I to do with it?" Cornelia demanded, liking and not liking to have the decision seem left to her. "I shall have nothing to do with it if she doesn't do it of her own accord."

"You may be sure that she shall not have even a suggestion of any kind," said Ludlow, solemnly.

"I shall know it if she does," Cornelia retorted, not so solemnly, and they both laughed.

While he stayed and talked with her the affair had its reason and justification; it seemed very simple and natural; but when he went away it began to look difficult and absurd. It was something else she would have to keep secret, like that folly of the past; it cast a malign light upon Ludlow, and showed him less wise and less true than she had thought him. She must take back her consent; she must send for him, write to him, and do it; but she did not know how without seeming to blame him, and she wished to blame only

herself. She let the evening go by, and she stood before the glass, putting up her hand to her back hair to extract the first dismantling hairpin, for a sleepless night, when a knock at her door was followed by the words, "He's waitun' in the parlor." The door was opened and the Irish girl put a card in her hand.

XXIV.

THE card was Ludlow's, and the words, "Do see me, if you can, for a moment," were scribbled on it.

Cornelia ran down stairs. He was standing, hat in hand, under the leafy gas chandelier in the parlor, and he said at once, "I've come back to say it won't do. You can't come to paint Miss Maybough with me. It would be a trick. I wonder I ever thought of such a thing."

She broke out in a joyful laugh. "I knew you came for that."

He continued to accuse himself, to explain himself. He ended, "You must have been despising me!"

"I despised myself. But I had made up my mind to tell Charmian all about it. There's no need to do that, now it's all over."

"But it isn't all over for me," said Ludlow gloomily. "I went straight home from here, and wrote to Mrs. Maybough that I would paint her daughter, and now I'm in for it."

He looked so acutely miserable that Cornelia gave

way to a laugh, which had the effect of raising his fallen spirits, and making him laugh, too. They sat down together and began to talk the affair all over again.

Some of the boarders who were at the theatre came in before he rose to go.

Cornelia followed him out into the hall. "Then there is nothing for me to do about it?"

"No, nothing," he said, "unless you want to take the commission off my hands, and paint the picture alone." He tried to look gloomy again, but he smiled.

Every one slept late at Mrs. Montgomery's on Sunday morning; all sects united in this observance of the day; in fact you could not get breakfast till nine. Cornelia opened her door somewhat later even than this, and started at the sight of Charmian Maybough standing there, with her hand raised in act to knock. They exchanged little shrieks of alarm.

"Did I scare you? Well, it's worth it, and you'll say so when you know what's happened. Go right back in!" Charmian pushed Cornelia back and shut the door. "You needn't try to guess, and I won't ask you to. But it's simply this: Mr. Ludlow is going to paint me. What do you think of that? Though I sha'n't expect you to say at once. But it's so. Mamma wrote to him several days ago, but she kept the whole

affair from me till she knew he would do it, and he only sent his answer last night after dinner." Charmian sat down on the side of the bed with the effect of intending to take all the time that was needed for the full sensation. "And now, while you're absorbing the great central fact, I will ask if you have any idea why I have rushed down here this morning before you were up, or mamma either, to interview you?"

"No, I haven't," said Cornelia.

"You don't happen to have an olive or a cracker anywhere about? I don't need them for illustration, but I haven't had any breakfast, yet."

"There are some ginger-snaps in the bureau box right before you," said Cornelia from the window-sill.

"Ginger-snaps will do, in an extreme case like this," said Charmian, and she left her place long enough to search the bureau box. "What little ones!" she sighed. "But no matter; I can eat them all." She returned to her seat on Cornelia's bed with the paper bag which she had found, in her hand. "Well, I have thought it perfectly out, and all you have to do is to give your consent; and if you knew how much valuable sleep I had lost, thinking it out, you would consent at once. You know that the sittings will have to be at his studio, and that I shall have to have somebody go

with me. Cornelia was silent, and Charmian urged, "You know that much, don't you?"

"Yes, I suppose so," Cornelia allowed.

"Well, then, you know I could have mamma go, but it would bore her; or I could have a maid go, but that would bore me; and so I've decided to have you go."

"Me?"

"Yes; and don't say you can't till you know what you're talking about. It'll take all your afternoons for a week or a fortnight, and you'll think you can't give the time. But I'll tell you how you can, and more too; how you can give the whole winter, if it takes him that long to paint me; but they say he paints very rapidly, and gets his picture at a dash, or else doesn't get it at all; and it's neither more nor less than this: I'm going to get him to let you paint me at the same time? What do you think of that?"

All our motives are mixed, and it was not pure conscience which now wrought in Cornelia. It was pride, too, and a certain resentment that Charmian should assume authority to make Mr. Ludlow do this or that. For an instant she questioned whether he had not broken faith with her, and got Charmian to propose this; then she knew that it could not have been. She said coldly, "I can't do it."

"*What!* Not when I've come down here before breakfast to ask you? Why can't you?" Charmian wailed.

"Because Mr. Ludlow was here last night, and asked me to do it."

"He *did?* Then I am the happiest girl in the world! Let me embrace you, Cornelia!"

"Don't be — disgusting!" said Cornelia, but she felt that Charmian was generously glad of the honor done her, and that she had wronged her by suspecting her of a wish to show power over Mr. Ludlow. "I told him I couldn't, and I can't, because it would have seemed to be making use of you, and — and — you wouldn't like it, and I wouldn't like it in your place, and — I wouldn't do it. And I should have to tell you that he proposed it, and that you would perfectly hate it."

"When it was the very first thing I thought of? Let me embrace you again, Cornelia Saunders, you adorable wooden image! Why his proposing it makes it perfectly divine, and relieves me of all responsibility. Oh, I would come down here every *day* before breakfast a whole week, for a moment like this! Then it's all settled; and we will send him word that we will begin to-morrow afternoon. Let's discuss the charac-

ter you will do me in. I want you to paint me in character — both of you — something allegorical or mythical. Or perhaps you're hungry, too! And I've eaten every one of the snaps."

"No, I can't do it," Cornelia still protested; but the reasons why she could not, seemed to have escaped her, or to have turned into mere excuses. In fact, since Charmian had proposed it, and seemed to wish it, they were really no longer reasons. Cornelia alleged them again with a sense of their fatuity. She did not finally assent; she did not finally refuse; but she felt that she was very weak.

"I see what you're thinking about," said Charmian, "but you needn't be afraid. I shall not show anything out. I shall be a perfect — tomb."

"What do you mean?" demanded Cornelia, with a vexation heightened by the sense of her own insincerity.

"Oh, *you* know what. But from this time forth *I* don't. It will be glorious not to let myself realize it. I shall just sit and think up conundrums, and not hear, or see, or dream anything. Yes, I can do it, and it will be splendid practice. This is the way I shall look." She took a pose in Cornelia's one chair, and put on an air of impenetrable mystery, which she re-

linquished a moment to explain, "Of course this back is rather too stiff and straight; I shall be more crouching." She pushed a ginger-snap between her lips, and chewed enigmatically upon it. "See?" she said.

"Now, look here, Charmian Maybough," said Cornelia sternly, "if you ever mention that again, or allude to it the least in the world" —

"Don't I *say* I won't?" demanded Charmian, jumping up. "That will be the whole fun of it. From the very first moment, till I'm framed and hung in a good light, I'm going to be *mum*, through and through, and if *you* don't speak of him, I sha'n't, except as a fellow-artist."

"What a simpleton!" said Cornelia. She laughed in spite of her vexation. "I'm not obliged to let what you think trouble me."

"Of course not."

"Your thinking it doesn't make it so."

"No" —

"But if you let *him* see" —

"The whole idea is *not* to let him see! That's what I shall do it all for. Good-by!"

She put the paper bag down on the bureau for the greater convenience of embracing Cornelia.

"Why don't you stay and have breakfast with me?" Cornelia asked. "You'll be sick."

"Breakfast? And ruin everything! I would rather *never* have any breakfast!" She took up the paper bag again, and explored it with an eager hand, while she stared absently at Cornelia. "Ah! I *thought* there was one left! What mites of things." She put the last ginger-snap into her mouth, and with a flying kiss to Cornelia as she passed, she flashed out of the door, and down the stairs.

XXV.

After all, Ludlow decided that he would paint Charmian in her own studio, with the accessories of her peculiar pose in life about her; they were factitious, but they were genuine expressions of her character; he could not realize her so well away from there.

The first afternoon was given to trying her in this light and that, and studying her from different points. She wished to stand before her easel, in her Synthesis working-dress, with her palette on her thumb, and a brush in her other hand. He said finally, "Why not?" and Cornelia made a tentative sketch of her.

At the end of the afternoon he waited while the girl was putting on her hat in Charmian's room, where she smiled into the glass at Charmian's face over her shoulder, thinking of the intense fidelity her friend had shown throughout to her promise of unconsciousness.

"Didn't I do it magnificiently?" Charmian demanded. "It almost killed me; but I meant to do it

if it did kill me; and now his offering to see you aboard the car shows that *he* is determined to do it, too, if it kills *him*. I call it masterly."

"Well, don't go and spoil it now," said Cornelia. "And if you're going to ask me every day how you've done" —

"Oh, I'm not! Only the first day and the last day!"

"Well!"

As Ludlow walked with Cornelia toward the point where she was to take her car down town, he began, "You see, she is *so* dramatic, that if you tried to do her in any other way — that is, simply — you would be doing her artificially. You have to take her as she is, don't you think?"

"I don't know as I think Charmian is acting all the time, if that's what you mean," said Cornelia. "Or any of the time, even."

Ludlow wished she had said she did not know *that* instead of *as*, but he reflected that ninety Americans out of a hundred, lettered or unlettered, would have said the same. "Oh, I don't at all mean that she is, intentionally. It's because it's her nature that I want to recognize it. You think it *is* her nature, don't you?" he asked deferentially.

"Oh, I suppose it is," she answered; it amused her to have him take such a serious tone about Charmian.

"I shall have to depend a great deal on your judgment in that matter," he went on. "You won't mind it, I hope?"

"Not if you won't mind it's not being worth anything."

"It will be worth everything!"

"Or if you won't care for my not giving it, sometimes."

"I don't understand."

"Well, I shouldn't want to seem to talk her over."

"Oh, no! You *don't* think I expected you to do that? It was merely the right point of view I wanted to get."

"I don't know as I object to that," said Cornelia.

The car which she wished to take came by, and he stopped it and handed her aboard. She thought he might decide to come with her, but he bowed his good-night, and she saw him walking on down town as she passed him.

At the end of a fortnight Ludlow had failed to get his picture of Charmian; at the end of a month he began with a new pose and a fresh theory. That quality of hers which he hoped to surprise with Corne-

lia's help, and which was to give verity and value to his portrait, when once he expressed it there, escaped him still.

She was capable of perfect poses, but they were mere flashes of attitude. Then the antique mystery lurking in her face went out of it, and she became *fin de siècle* and romantic, and young ladyish, and uninteresting to Ludlow.

She made tea every afternoon when they finished, and sometimes the talk they began with before they began work prolonged itself till the time for the tea had come. On the days when Mr. Plaisdell dropped in for a cup, the talk took such a range that the early dark fell before it ended, and then Cornelia had to stay for dinner and to be sent home in Mrs. Maybough's coupé.

She had never supposed there was anything like it in all the world. Money, and, in a certain measure, the things that money could buy, were imaginable in Pymantoning; but joys so fine, so simple as these, were what she could not have forecast from any ground of experience or knowledge. She tried to give her mother a notion of what they said and did; but she told her frankly she never could understand. Mrs. Saunders, in fact, could not see why it was so exciting;

she read Cornelia's letters to Mrs. Burton, who said she could see, and she told Mrs. Saunders that she would like it as much as Cornelia did, if she were in her place; that she was a kind of Bohemian herself.

She tried to explain what Bohemian meant, and what Bohemia was; but this is what no one can quite do. Charmian herself, who aimed to be a perfect Bohemian, was uncertain of the ways and means of operating the Bohemian life, when she had apparently thrown off all the restrictions, for the afternoon, at least, that prevented its realization. She had a faultless setting for it. There never was a girl's studio that was more like a man's studio, an actual studio. Mr. Ludlow himself praised it; he said he felt at home in it, and he liked it because it was not carried a bit too far. Charmian's mother had left her free to do what she wished, and there was not a convention of Philistine housekeeping in the arrangement of the place. Everything was in the admired disorder of an artist's environment; but Mrs. Maybough insisted upon neatness. Even here Charmian had to submit to a compromise. She might and did keep things strewn all about in her studio, but every morning the housemaid was sent in to sweep it and dust it. She was a housemaid of great intelligence, and an imperfect sense of humor,

and she obeyed with unsmiling scrupulosity the instructions she had to leave everything in Miss Charmian's studio exactly as she found it, but to leave it clean. In consequence, this home of art had an effect of indescribable coldness and bareness, and there were at first some tempestuous scenes which Cornelia witnessed between Charmian and her mother, when the girl vainly protested:

"But don't you *see*, mamma, that if you have it regularly dusted, it never can have any sentiment, any atmosphere?"

"I don't see how you can call *dust* atmosphere, my dear," said her step-mother. "If I left your studio looking as you want it, and there should be a fire, what would people think?"

"Well, if there should happen to be anybody from Wilbraham, Mass.," Charmian retorted, "they might criticise, but I don't think the New York Fire Department would notice whether the place had been dusted or not. But, go on, mamma! *Some* day I shall have a studio out of the house — Cornelia and I are going to have one — and then I guess you won't have it dusted!"

"I'm sure Miss Saunders wouldn't let it get dusty," said Mrs. Maybough, and then, in self-defence, Char-

mian gave Cornelia the worst character for housekeeping that she could invent from her knowledge of Cornelia's room.

She begged her pardon afterwards, but she said she had to do it, and she took what comfort she could in slamming everything round, as she called it, in her studio, when she went with Cornelia to have her coffee there. The maid restored it to its conscious picturesqueness the next day.

Charmian was troubled to decide what was truly Bohemian to eat, when they became hungry over their work. She provided candy and chocolate in all their forms and phases, but all girls ate candy and chocolate, and they were so missish, and so indistinctive, and they both went so badly with tea, which she must have because of the weird effect of the spirit-lamp under the kettle, that she disused them after the first week. There remained always crackers, which went with anything, but the question was what to have with them. Their natural association with cheese was rejected because Charmian said she should be ashamed to offer Mr. Ludlow those insipid little Neufchatel things, which were made in New Jersey, anyway, and the Gruyère smelt so, and so did Comembert; and pine-apple cheese was Philistine. There was nothing

for it but olives, and though olives had no savor of originality, the little crescent ones were picturesque, and if you picked them out of the bottle with the end of a brush-handle, sharpened to a point, and the other person received them with their thumb and finger, the whole act was indisputably Bohemian.

There was one day when they all got on particularly well, and Charmian boldly ordered some champagne for a burst. The man brought back Apollinaris water, and she was afraid to ask why, for fear he should say Mrs. Maybough sent it. Ludlow said he never took champagne, and was awfully glad of the Apollinaris, and so the change was a great success, for neither Charmian nor Cornelia counted, in any case; they both hated every kind of wine.

Another time, Cornelia, when she came, found Charmian lighting one of the cigars kept for show on her mantel. She laughed wildly at Cornelia's dismay, and the smoke, which had been going up her nose, went down her throat in a volume, and Cornelia had to run and catch her; she was reaching out in every direction for help.

Cornelia led her to the couch, which was still waiting its rugs to become a bed, and she lay down there, very pale and still, and was silent a long time, till

Cornelia said, "Now, if I could find a mouse somewhere to run over you," and they both burst into a shriek of laughter.

"But I'm going to *learn*," Charmian declared. "Where did that cigar go?" She sprang up to look for it, but they never could find it, and they decided it must have gone into the fire, and been burnt up; that particular cigar seemed essential to the experiment, or at least Charmian did not try another.

They were both very grave after Ludlow came. When he went away, he said, with an absent look at Charmian, "You have a magnificent pallor to-day, Miss Maybough, and I must compliment you on keeping much quieter than usual."

"Oh, thank you," said Charmian, gravely, and as soon as the door closed upon him she flung herself into Cornelia's arms, and they stifled their laughter in each other's necks. It seemed to them that nothing so wildly funny had ever happened before; they remained a long while quaking over the question whether there was smell of smoke enough in the room to have made him suspect anything, and whether his congratulations were not ironical. Charmian said that her mistake was in not beginning with a cigarette instead of a cigar; she said she was ready to begin with a cigarette then,

and she dared Cornelia to try one, too. Cornelia refused the challenge, and then she said, well, she would do it herself, some day.

There was a moment when it seemed to her that the Bohemian ideal could be realized to a wild excess in pop-corn. She bought a popper and three ears of corn, and brought them home tied up in paper, and fastened to some canvases she got for Cornelia. She insisted that it was part of the bargain that she should supply Cornelia's canvases. But the process of popping made them all very red in the face; they had to take it by turns, for she would not let Ludlow hold the popper the whole time. They had a snowy heap of corn at last, which she put on the hearth before them in the hollow of a Japanese shield, detached from a suit of armor, for that use. They sat on the hearth to eat it, and they told ghost-stories and talked of the most psychological things they could think of. In all this Charmian put Cornelia forward as much as she dared, and kept herself in a sort of impassioned abeyance. If Cornelia had been the most jealous and exacting of principals she could not have received from her second a more single and devoted allegiance. Charmian's joy in her fortunately mounted in proportion to the devotion she paid her, rather than Cornelia's grati-

tude for it. She did not like to talk of herself, and these séances were nothing if not strictly personal; but Charmian talked for her, and represented her in phases of interest which Cornelia repudiated with a laugh, or denied outright, without scruple, when the invention was too bold. Charmian contrived that she should acquire the greater merit, from her refusals of it, and went on to fresh self-sacrifices in her behalf.

Sometimes she started the things they talked of; not because she ever seemed to have been thinking of them, or of anything, definitely, but because she was always apparently letting her mind wander about in space, and chanced upon them there. Mostly, however, the suggestions came from Ludlow. He talked of art, its methods, its principles, its duties to the age, the people, the civilization; the large moral uses, which kindled Charmian's fancy, and made Cornelia laugh when Charmian proposed a scheme for the relief and refinement of the poor on the East Side, by frescoing the outsides of the tenement houses in Mott Street and Mulberry Bend, with subjects recalling the home life of the dwellers there: rice-fields and tea-plantations for the Chinese, and views of Etna and Vesuvius and their native shores for the Sicilians and Neapolitans, with perhaps religious histories.

Ludlow had to explain that he had not meant the employment of any such direct and obvious means, but the gradual growth of a conscience in art. Cornelia thought him vague, but it seemed clear to Charmian. She said, "Oh, yes; *that*," and she made tea, and had him set fire to some pieces of Southern lightwood on her hearth, for the sake of the murky fumes and the wreaths of dusky crimson flame, which she said it was so weird to sit by.

In all matters of artistic theory and practice she set Cornelia the example of grovelling at the master's feet, as if there could be no question of anything else; but in other things Cornelia sometimes asserted herself against this slavish submission with a kind of violence little short of impertinence. After these moral paroxysms, in which she disputed the most obviously right and reasonable things, she was always humiliated and cast down before his sincerity in trying to find a meaning in her difference from him, as if he could not imagine the nervous impulse that carried her beyond the bounds of truth, and must accuse himself of error. When this happened she would not let Charmian take her to task for her behavior; she would not own that she was wrong; she put the blame on him, and found him arrogant and patronizing. She had always known

he was that kind of person, and she did not mean to be treated like a child in everything, even if he was a genius.

By this time they were far away from that point in Charmian's romance where the faithful friend of the heroine remains forever constant to her vow not to speak to the heroine of the hero's passion for her, and in fact rather finds it a duty to break her vow, and enjoys being snubbed for it. As the transaction of the whole affair took place in Charmian's fancy, Cornelia had been obliged to indulge her in it, with the understanding that she should not let it interfere with their work, or try to involve her visibly or palpably in it.

With all their idling they had days when they worked intensely, and Ludlow was as severe with Cornelia's work as he was with his own. He made her rub out and paint out, and he drew ruthless modifications of her work all over it, like the cruelest of the Synthesis masters. He made her paint out every day the work of the day before, as they did in the Synthesis; though sometimes he paused over it in a sort of puzzle. Once he said, holding her sketch into the light he wanted, at the close of the afternoon, "If I didn't know you had done that to-day, I should say it was the one you had done yesterday."

Toward the end of the month he recurred to this notion again. "Suppose," he said, "we keep this, and you do another to-morrow."

The next day he said, in the same perplexity, "Well, keep this, and do another."

After a week he took all her canvases, and set them one back of another, but so that he could see each in nearly the same light. He stood looking at them silently, with the two girls behind him, one at either shoulder.

"It's as lovely as standing between two mirrors," Charmian suggested dreamily.

"Pretty much of a sameness," Cornelia remarked.

"Mm," Ludlow made in his throat. He glanced over the shoulder next her, and asked, as if Charmian were not there, "What makes you do her always alike?"

"Because she *is* always alike."

"Then I've seen her wrong," said Ludlow, and he stared at Charmian as if she were a lay-figure. She bore his scrutiny as impassively as a lay-figure could.

He turned again to Cornelia's sketches, and said gloomily, "I should like to have Wetmore see these."

"Oh!" said Cornelia.

Charmian came to life with another "Oh!" and

then she demanded. "When? We must have something besides tea for Mr. Wetmore."

"I think I'll ask him to step round in the morning," said Ludlow, with authority.

Charmian said "Oh!" again, but submitted with the eagerness of a disciple; all phases of the art-life were equally precious, and even a snub from such a master must be willingly accepted.

He went away and would not have any tea; he had an air of trouble — almost of offence. "Isn't he grand, gloomy and peculiar?" Charmian said. "I wonder what's the matter?"

She turned to Ludlow's picture which he had left standing on the chair where he painted at it in disdain of an easel, and silently compared it with Cornelia's sketches. Then she looked at Cornelia and gave a dramatic start.

"What is the matter?" asked Cornelia. She came up and began to look at the picture, too.

Charmian demanded, "Don't you see?"

"No, I don't see anything," said Cornelia, but as she looked something became apparent which she could not deny. She blushed violently and turned upon Charmian. "You ought to be ashamed," she began, and she tried to take hold of her; she did not know why.

Charmian escaped, and fled to the other end of the room with a wild laugh, and stood there. Cornelia dropped into the chair before the picture, with her head fallen on her elbow. She seemed to be laughing, too, and Charmian went on:

"What is there to be ashamed of? I think it's glorious. It's one of the most romantic things I ever heard of. He simply couldn't help it, and it proves everything I've said. Of course that was the reason he couldn't see *me* all along. Why, if such a thing had happened to me, I should go round shouting it from the house-tops. I don't suppose he knew what he was doing, or else he didn't care; perfectly desperate. What *fun!*"

Cornelia kept laughing, but Charmian stopped and waited a moment and listened. "Why, Cornelia!" she said remorsefully, entreatingly, but she remained the length of the room away. Then she approached tentatively, and when Cornelia suddenly ceased to laugh she put her hand on her head, and tenderly lifted her face. It was dabbled with tears. "Cornelia!" she said again.

Cornelia sprang to her feet with a fierceness that sent her flying some yards away. "Charmian Maybough! Will you ever speak of this to any living soul?"

"No, no! Indeed I won't" — Charmian began.

"Will you ever *think* of it!"

"No" —

"Because I don't choose to have you think I am such a fool as to — to" —

"No, indeed, I don't."

"Because there isn't anything of it, and it wouldn't mean anything, if there were."

"No," said Charmian. "The only thing is to tear him out of your heart; and I will help you!" She made as if she were ready to begin then, and Cornelia broke into a genuine laugh.

"Don't be ridiculous. I guess there isn't much to tear."

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Nothing! What can I! There isn't anything to do anything about. If it's there, he knows it, and he's left it there because he didn't care what we thought. He was just trying something. He's always treated me like a perfect — child. That's all there is of it, and you know it."

"Yes," Charmian meekly assented. Then she plucked up a spirit in Cornelia's behalf. "The only thing is to keep going on the same as ever, and show him we haven't seen anything, and don't care if we have."

"No," said Cornelia sadly, "I shall not come any more. Or, if I do, it will just be to — I'm not certain yet what I shall do." She provisionally dried her eyes and repaired her looks at the little mirror which hung at one side of the mantel, and then came back to Charmian who stood looking at Cornelia's sketches, still in the order Ludlow had left them in. She stole her arm round Cornelia's waist. "Well, anyway, he can't say *you've* returned the compliment. They're perfectly magnificent, every one; and they're all *me*. Now we can *both* live for art."

XXVI.

WETMORE came the next morning with Ludlow, and looked at Cornelia's studies. "Well, there's no doubt about her talent. I wonder why it was wasted on one of her sex! These gifted girls, poor things, there don't seem to be any real call for them." He turned from the sketches a moment to the arrangement of Charmian's studio. "I suppose this is the other girl's expression." He looked more closely at the keeping of the room, and said, with a smile of mixed compassion and amusement, "Why, this girl seems to be trying to do the Bohemian act!"

"That is her pose," Ludlow admitted.

"And does she get a great deal of satisfaction out of it?"

"The usual amount I fancy." Ludlow began to tell of some of Charmian's attempts to realize her ideal.

Wetmore listened with a pitying smile. "Poor thing! It isn't much like the genuine thing, as we used to see it in Paris, is it? We Americans are too innocent in our traditions and experiences; our Bohe-

mia is a non-alcoholic, unfermented condition. When it is diluted down to the apprehension of an American girl it's no better, or no worse, than a kind of Arcadia. Miss Maybough ought to go round with a shepherdess's crook and a straw hat with daisies in it. That's what *she* wants to do, if she knew it. Is that a practicable pipe? I suppose those cigarettes are chocolates in disguise. Well!" He reverted to Cornelia's canvases. "Why, of course they're good. She's doomed. She will have to exhibit. You couldn't do less, Ludlow, than have her carry this one a little farther" — he picked out one of the canvases and set it apart — "and offer it to the Academy."

"Do you really think so?' asked Ludlow, looking at it gravely.

"I don't know. With the friends you've got on the Committee — But you don't suppose I came up here to see these things alone, did you? Where's *your* picture?"

"I haven't any," said Ludlow.

"Oh, rubbish! Where's your theory of a picture, then? I don't care what you call it. My only anxiety, when you got a plain, simple, every-day conundrum like Miss Maybough to paint, was that you would try to paint the answer instead of the conun-

drum, and I dare say that's the trouble. You've been trying to give something more of her character than you found in her face; is that it? Well, you deserved to fail, then. You've been trying to *interpret* her; to come the prophet! I don't condemn the poetry in your nature, Ludlow," Wetmore went on, "and if I could manage it for you, I think I could keep it from doing mischief. That is why I am so plain-spoken with you."

"Do you call it plain-speaking?" Ludlow said, putting his picture where it could be seen best. "I was going to accuse you of flattery."

"Well, you had better ponder the weighty truths I have let fall. I don't go round dropping them on everybody's toes."

"Probably there are not enough of them," Ludlow suggested.

"Oh, yes, there are." Wetmore waited till Ludlow should say he was ready to have him look at his picture. "The fact is, I've been giving a good deal of attention to your case, lately. You're not simple enough, and you've had the wrong training. You would naturally like to paint the literature of a thing, and let it go at that. But you've studied in France, where they know better, and you can't bring yourself

to do it. Your nature and your school are at odds. You ought to have studied in England. They don't know how to paint there, but they've brought fiction in color to the highest point, and they're not ashamed of it."

"Perhaps you've been theorizing, too," said Ludlow, stepping aside from his picture.

"Not on canvas," Wetmore returned. He put himself in the place Ludlow had just left. "Hello!" he began, but after a glance at Ludlow he went on, with the effect of having checked himself, to speak carefully and guardedly of the work in detail. His specific criticism was as gentle and diffident as his general censure of Ludlow was blunt and outright. It was given mostly in questions, and in recognitions of intention.

"Well, the sum of it is," said Ludlow at last, "you see it's a failure."

Wetmore shrugged, as if this were something Ludlow ought not to have asked. He went back to Cornelia's sketches, and looked at them one after another. "That girl knows what she's about, or what she wants to do, and she goes for it every time. She *has* got talent. Whether she's got enough to stand the training! That's the great difference, after all. Lots of

people have talent; that's the gift. The question is whether one has it in paying quantity, or enough of it to amount to anything after the digging and refining. I should say that girl had, but very likely I might be mistaken."

Ludlow joined in the examination of the sketches. He put his hand on the weak points as well as on the strong ones; he enjoyed with Wetmore the places where her artlessness had frankly offered itself instead of her art. There was something ingenuous and honest in it all that made it all charming.

"Yes, I think she can do it," said Wetmore, "if she wants to bad enough, or if she doesn't want to get married worse."

Ludlow winced. "Isn't there something a little vulgar in that notion of ours that a woman always wishes first and most of all to get married?"

"My dear boy," said Wetmore, with an affectionate hand on Ludlow's shoulder, "I never denied being vulgar."

"Oh, I dare say. But I was thinking of myself."

Ludlow sent word to Charmian at the Synthesis that he should not ask her to sit to him that afternoon, and in the evening he went to see Wetmore. It was eleven o'clock, and he would have been welcome at

Wetmore's any time between that hour of the night and two of the morning. He found a number of people. Mrs. Westley was there with Mrs. Rangeley; they had been at a concert together. Mrs. Wetmore had just made a Welsh rabbit, and they were all talking of the real meaning of the word "beautiful."

"*I* think," Mrs. Rangeley was saying, "that the beautiful is whatever pleases or fascinates. There are lots of good-looking people who are not beautiful at all, because they have no atmosphere: and you see other people, who are irregular, and quite plain even, and yet you come away feeling that they are perfectly beautiful." Mrs. Rangeley's own beauty was a little irregular. She looked anxiously round, and caught Wetmore in a smile. "What are you laughing at?" she demanded in rueful deprecation.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" he said. "I was thinking how convincing you were!"

"Nothing of the kind!" said one of the men, who had been listening patiently till she fully committed herself. "There couldn't be a more fallacious notion of the meaning of beauty. The thing exists in itself, independently of our pleasure or displeasure; they have almost nothing to do with it. If you mix it with them you are lost, as far as a true conception of it

goes. Beauty is something as absolute as truth, and whatever varies from it, as it was ascertained, we'll say, by the Greek sculptors and the Italian painters, is unbeautiful, just as anything that varies from the truth is untrue. Charm, fascination, atmosphere, are purely subjective; one feels them and another doesn't. But beauty is objective, and nobody can deny it who sees it, whether he likes it or not. You can't get away from it, any more than you can get away from the truth. There it is!"

"Where?" asked Wetmore. He looked at the ladies as if he thought one of them had been indicated.

"How delightful to have one's ideas jumped on just as if they were a man's!" sighed Mrs. Rangeley. Her opponent laughed a generous delight, as if he liked nothing better than having his reasoning brought to naught. He entered joyously into the tumult which the utterance of the different opinions, prejudices and prepossessions of the company became.

Ludlow escaped from it, and made his way to Mrs. Westley, in that remoter and quieter corner, which she seemed to find everywhere when you saw her out of her own house; there she was necessarily prominent.

"I think Mr. Agnew is right, and Mrs. Rangeley is altogether wrong," she said. "There couldn't be a

better illustration of it than in those two young art-student friends of yours. Miss Saunders is beautiful in just that absolute way Mr. Agnew speaks of; you simply can't refuse to see it; and Miss Maybough is fascinating, if you feel her so. I should think you'd find her very difficult to paint, and with Miss Saunders there, all the time, I should be afraid of getting her decided qualities into my picture."

Ludlow said, "Ah, that's very interesting."

He meant to outstay the rest, for he wished to speak with Wetmore alone, and it seemed as though those people would never go. They went at last. Mrs. Wetmore herself went off to the domestic quarter of the apartment, and left the two men together.

"'Baccy?" asked Wetmore, with a hospitable gesture toward the pipes on his mantel.

"No, thank you," said Ludlow.

"Well?"

"Wetmore, what was it you saw in my picture to-day, when you began with that 'Hello' of yours, and then broke off to say something else?"

"Did I do that? Well, if you really wish to know" —

"I do!"

"I'll tell you. I was going to ask you which of

those two girls you had painted it from. The topography was the topography of Miss Maybough, but the landscape was the landscape of Miss Saunders." He waited, as if for Ludlow to speak; then he went on: "I supposed you had been working from some new theory of yours, and I thought I had said about as much on your theories as you would stand for the time."

"Was that all?" Ludlow asked.

"All? It seems to me that's a good deal to be compressed into one small 'hello.'"

Wetmore lighted a pipe, and began to smoke in great comfort. "We were talking, just before you dropped in, of what you may call the psychical chemistry of our kind of shop: the way a fellow transmutes himself into everything he does. I can trace the man himself in every figure he draws or models. You can't get away from yourself, simply because you are always thinking yourself, or through yourself; you can't see or know any one else in any other way."

"It's a very curious thing," said Ludlow, uneasily. "I've noticed that, too; I suppose every one has. But —good-night."

Wetmore followed him out of the studio to the head of the public stairs with a lamp, and Ludlow stopped

there again. "Should you think there was anything any one but you would notice?"

"You mean the two girls themselves? Well, I should say, on general principles, that what two such girls didn't see in your work" —

"Of course! Then — what would you do? Would you speak to her about it?"

"Which?"

"You know: Miss Saunders."

"Ah! It seems rather difficult, doesn't it?"

"Confoundedly."

"Why, if you mean to say it was unconscious, perhaps I was mistaken. The thing may have been altogether in my own mind. I'd like to take another look at it" —

"You can't. I've painted it out." Ludlow ran down one flight of the stairs, and then came stumbling quickly back. "I say, Wetmore. Do you tell your wife everything?"

"My dear boy, I don't tell her anything. She finds it out. But, then, *she* never tells anybody."

XXVII.

Ludlow sent word again to Charmian that he should not be able to keep his appointment for the afternoon, and as soon as he could hope to find Cornelia at home from the Synthesis, he went to see her.

He began abruptly, "I came to tell you, Miss Saunders, when I first thought of painting Miss Maybough, and now I've come to tell you that I've given it up."

"Given it up?" she repeated.

"You've seen the failures I've made. I took my last one home yesterday, and painted it out." He looked at Cornelia, but if he expected her to give him any sort of leading, he was disappointed. He had to conclude unaided, "I'm not going to try any more."

She did not answer, and he went on, after a moment: "Of course, it's humiliating to make a failure, but it's better to own it, and leave it behind you; if you don't own it, you have to carry it with you, and it remains a burden."

She kept her eyes away from him, but she said, "Oh, yes; certainly"

"The worst of it was the disappointment I had to inflict upon Mrs. Maybough," he went on uneasily. "She was really hurt, and I don't believe I convinced her after all that I simply and honestly couldn't get the picture. I went to tell her this afternoon, and she seemed to feel some sort of disparagement — I can't express it — in my giving it up."

He stopped, and Cornelia asked, as if forced to say something, "Does Charmian know?"

"I suppose she does, by this time," said Ludlow. He roused himself from a moment of revery, and added, "But I didn't intend to oppress you with this. I want to tell you something — else."

He drew a deep breath. She started forward where she sat, and looked past him at the door, as if to see whether the way of escape was clear. He went on: "I took Wetmore there with me yesterday, and I showed him your sketches, and he thinks you might get one of them into the Academy exhibition in the spring, after you've carried it a little farther."

She sank back in her chair. "Does he?" she asked listlessly, and she thought, as of another person, how her heart would once have thrilled at the hope of this.

"Yes. But I don't feel sure that it would be well,"

said Ludlow. "I wanted to say, though, that I shall be glad to come and be of any little use I can if you're going on with it."

"Oh, thank you," said Cornelia. She thought she was going to say something more, but she stopped stiffly at that, and they both stood in an embarrassment which neither could hide from the other. He repeated his offer, in other terms, and she was able finally to thank him a little more fitly, and to say that she should not forget his kind offer; she should not forget all he had done for her, all the trouble he had taken, and they parted with a vague alienation.

As we grow older, we are impatient of misunderstandings, of disagreements; we make haste to have them explained; but while we are young, life seems so spacious and so full of chances that we fetch a large compass round about such things, and wait for favoring fortuities, and hope for occasions precisely fit; we linger in dangerous delays, and take risks that may be ruinous.

Cornelia went back to her work at the Synthesis as before, but she worked listlessly and aimlessly; the zest was gone, and the meaning. She knew that for the past month she had drudged through the morning at the Synthesis that she might free herself to the

glad endeavor of the afternoon at Charmian's studio with a good conscience. Ludlow's criticism, even when it was harshest, was incentive and inspiration; and her life was blank and dull on the old terms.

The arts have a logic of their own, which seems no logic at all to the interests. Ludlow's world found it altogether fit and intelligible that he should give up trying to paint Charmian if he had failed to get his picture of her, and thought he could not get it. Mrs. Maybough's world regarded it as a breach of contract for him not to do what he had undertaken. She had more trouble to reconcile her friends to his behavior than she had in justifying it to herself. Through Charmian she had at least a second-hand appreciation of motives and principles that were instantly satisfactory to the girl and to all her comrades at the Synthesis; they accepted it as another proof of Ludlow's greatness that he should frankly own he had missed his picture of her, and they exalted Charmian as a partner in his merit, for being so impossible. The arguments of Wetmore went for something with Mrs. Maybough, though they were mainly admissions to the effect that Ludlow was more of a crank than he had supposed, and would have to be humored in a case of the kind; but it was chiefly the courage and friendship

of Mrs. Westley that availed. She enforced what she had to say in his behalf with the invitation to her January Thursdays which she had brought. She had brought it in person because she wished to beg Mrs. Maybough to let her daughter come with her friend, Miss Saunders, and pour tea at the first of the Thursdays.

"I got you off," she said to Ludlow, when they met, "but it was not easy. She still thinks you ought to have let her see your last attempt, and left her to decide whether it was good or not."

Mrs. Westley showed her amusement at this, but Ludlow answered gravely that there was a certain reason in the position. "If she's disappointed in not having any portrait, though," he added, "she had better take Miss Saunders's."

"Do you really mean that?" Mrs. Westley asked, with more or less of that incredulity concerning the performance of a woman which all the sex feel, in spite of their boasting about one another. "Has she so much talent?"

"Why not? Somebody has to have the talent."

This was like Wetmore's tone, and it made Mrs. Westley think of him. "And do you believe she could get her picture into the exhibition?"

"Has Wetmore been talking to you about it?"

"Yes."

"I don't know," said Ludlow. "That was Wetmore's notion."

"And does she know about it?"

"I mentioned it to her."

"It would be a great thing for her if she could get her picture in — and sell it."

"Yes," Ludlow dryly admitted. He wished he had never told Mrs. Westley how Cornelia had earned the money for her studies at the Synthesis; he resented the implication of her need, and Mrs. Westley vaguely felt that she had somehow gone wrong. She made haste to retrieve her error by suggesting, "Perhaps Miss Maybough would object, though."

"That's hardly thinkable," said Ludlow lightly. He would have gone away without making Mrs. Westley due return for the trouble she had taken for him with Mrs. Maybough, and she was so far vexed that she would have let him go without telling him that she was going to have his *protégée* pour tea for her; she had fancied that this would have pleased him.

But by one of those sudden flashes that seem to come from somewhere without, he saw himself in the odious light in which she must see him, and he turned

in time. "Mrs. Westley, I think you have taken a great deal more pains for me than I'm worth. It's difficult to care what such a poor little Philistine as Mrs. Maybough — the mere figment of somebody else's misgotten money — thinks of me. But she *is* to be regarded, and I know that you have looked after her in my interest; and it's very kind of you, and very good — it's like you. If you've done it, though, with the notion of my keeping on in portraits, or getting more portraits to paint, I'm sorry, for I shall not try to do any. I'm not fit for that kind of work. I don't say it because I despise the work, but because I despise myself. I should always let some wretched preoccupation of my own — some fancy, some whim — come between me and what I see my sitter to be, and paint that."

"That is, you have some imagination," she began, in defence of him against himself.

"No, no! There's scope for the greatest imagination, the most intense feeling, in portraits. But I can't do that kind of thing, and I must stick to my little sophistical fantasies, or my bald reports of nature. But Miss Saunders, if she were not a woman — excuse me!" —

"Oh, I understand!"

"She could do it, and she will, if she keeps on. She could have a career; she could be a painter of women's portraits. A man's idea of a woman, it's interesting, of course, but it's never quite just; it's never quite true; it can't be. Every woman knows that, but you go on accepting men's notions of women, in literature and in art, as if they were essentially, or anything but superficially, like women. I couldn't get a picture of Miss Maybough because I was always making more or less than there really was of her. You were speaking the other night at Wetmore's, of the uncertain quality of her beauty, and the danger of getting something else in," said Ludlow, suddenly grappling with the fact, "and I was always doing that, or else leaving everything out. Her beauty has no fixed impression. It ranges from something exquisite to something grotesque; just as she ranges in character from the noblest generosity to the most inconceivable absurdity. You never can know how she will look or how she will behave. At least, *I* couldn't. I was always guessing at her; but Miss Saunders seemed to understand her. All her studies of her are alike; the last might be taken for the first, except that the handling is better. It's invariably the very person, without being in the least photographic, as people call it, because it is one

woman's unclouded perception of another. The only question is whether Miss Saunders can keep that saving simplicity. It may be trained out of her, or she may be taught to put other things before it. Wetmore felt the danger of that, when we looked at her sketches. I'm not saying they're not full of faults; the technique is bad enough; sometimes it's almost childish; but the root of the matter is there. She knows what she sees, and she tells."

"Really?" said Mrs. Westley. "It *is* hard for a woman to believe much in women; we don't expect anything of each other yet. Should you like her to paint me?"

"I?"

"I mean, do you think she could do it?"

"Not yet. She doesn't know enough of life, even if she knew enough of art. She merely painted another girl."

"That is true," said Mrs. Westley with a sigh. She added impersonally, "But if people only kept to what they knew, and didn't do what they divined, there would be very little art or literature left, it seems to me."

"Well, perhaps the less the better," said Ludlow, with a smile for the absurdity he was reduced to. "What was left would certainly be the best."

He felt as if his praise of Cornelia were somehow retrieval; as if it would avail where he seemed otherwise so helpless, and would bring them together on the old terms again. There was, indeed, nothing explicit in their alienation, and when he saw Cornelia at Mrs. Westley's first Thursday, he made his way to her at once, and asked her if she would give him some tea, with the effect of having had a cup from her the day before. He did not know whether to be pleased or not that she treated their meeting as something uneventful, too, and made a little joke about remembering that he liked his tea without sugar.

"I wasn't aware that you knew that," he said.

"Oh, yes; that is the way Charmian always made it for you; and sometimes I made it."

"To be sure. It seems a great while ago. How are you getting on with your picture?"

"I'm not getting on," said Cornelia, and she turned aside to make a cup of tea for an old gentleman, who confessed that he liked a spoonful of rum in his. General Westley had brought him up and presented him, and he remained chatting with Cornelia, apparently in the fatuity that if he talked trivially to her he would be the same as a young man. Ludlow stayed, too, and when the old gentleman got away, he said, the

same as if there had been no interruption, "Why aren't you getting on?"

"Because I'm not doing anything to it."

"You ought to. I told you what Wetmore said of it."

"Yes; but I don't know how," said Cornelia, with a laugh that he liked; it seemed an effect of pleasure in his presence at her elbow; though from time to time she ignored him, and talked with other people who came for tea. He noticed that she had begun to have a little society manner of her own; he did not know whether he liked it or not. She wore a very pretty dress, too; one he had not seen before.

"Will you let me show you how — as well as I can?"

"After I've asked you? Thank you!"

"I offered, once, before you asked."

"Oh!" said Cornelia, with her face aslant from him over her tea-cups. "I thought you had forgotten that."

He winced, but he knew that he deserved the little scratch. He did not try to exculpate himself, but he asked, "May I talk with Miss Maybough about it?"

Cornelia returned gayly, "It's a free country."

He rose from the chair which he had been keeping

at her elbow, and looked about over the room. It was very full, and the first of Mrs. Westley's Thursdays was successful beyond question. With the roving eye, which he would not suffer to be intercepted, he saw the distinguished people whom she had hitherto affected in their usual number, and in rather unusual number the society people who had probably come to satisfy an amiable curiosity; he made his reflection that Mrs. Westley's evolution was proceeding in the inevitable direction, and that in another winter the swells would come so increasingly that there would be no celebrities for them to see. His glance rested upon Mrs. Maybough, who stood in a little desolation of her own, trying to look as if she were not there, and he had the inspiration to go and speak to her instead of her daughter; there were people enough speaking to Charmian, or seeming to speak to her, which serves much the same purpose on such occasions. She was looking her most mysterious, and he praised her peculiar charm to Mrs. Maybough.

"It's no wonder I failed with that portrait."

Mrs. Maybough said, "You must try again, Mr. Ludlow."

"No, I won't abuse your patience again, but I will tell you: I should like to come and look now and then

at the picture Miss Saunders has begun of her, and that I want her to keep on with."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Maybough in the softest assent. She would not listen to the injuries which Ludlow heaped upon himself in proof of his unworthiness to cross her threshold.

He went back to Cornelia, and said, "Well, it's arranged. I've spoken with Mrs. Maybough, and we can begin again whenever you like."

"With Mrs. Maybough? You said you were going to speak to Charmian!"

"It doesn't matter, does it?"

"Yes. I — I don't know yet as I want to go on with the picture. I hadn't thought" —

"Oh!" said Ludlow, with marked politeness. "Then I misunderstood. But don't let it annoy you. It doesn't matter, of course. There's no sort of appointment."

He found Mrs. Westley in a moment of disoccupation before he went, and used a friend's right to recognize the brilliancy of her Thursday. She refused all merit for it, and asked him if he had ever seen anything like the contrast of Charmian at the chocolate with Cornelia at the tea. "Did you notice the gown Miss Saunders had on? It's one that her mother has

just sent her from home. She says her mother made it, and she came to ask me, the other day, if it would do to pour tea in. Wasn't it delightful? I'm going to have her spend a week with me in Lent. The general has taken a great fancy to her. I think I begin to appreciate her fascination; it's her courage and her candor together. Most girls are so uncertain and capricious. It's delightful to meet such a straightforward and downright creature."

"Oh, yes," said Ludlow.

XXVIII.

Cornelia knew that Ludlow was offended. She had not meant to hurt or offend him; though she thought he had behaved very queerly ever since he gave up painting Charmian. She had really not had time to think of his offer before he went off to speak with Charmian, as she supposed. The moment he was gone she saw that it would not do; that she could not have him coming to look at her work; she did not feel that she could ever touch it again. She wondered at him, and now if he had spoken to Mrs. Maybough instead of Charmian, it was not her fault, certainly. She did not wish to revenge herself, but she remembered how much she had been left to account for as she could, or painfully to ignore. If he was mystified and puzzled now, it was no more than she had been before.

There was nothing that Cornelia hated so much as to be made a fool of, and this was the grievance which she was willing fate should retaliate upon him, though she had not meant it at all. She ought to have been

satisfied, and she ought to have been happy, but she was not.

She wished to escape from herself, and she eagerly accepted an invitation to go with Mrs. Montgomery to the theatre that night. The manager had got two places and given them to the landlady.

Cornelia had a passion for the theatre, and in the excitement of the play, which worked strongly in her ingenuous fancy, she forgot herself for the time, or dimly remembered the real world and her lot in it, as if it were a subordinate action of the piece. At the end of the fourth act she heard a voice which she knew, saying, "Well, well! Is this the way the folks at Pymantoning expect you to spend your evenings?" She looked up and around, and saw Mr. Dickerson in the seat behind her. He put forward two hands over her shoulder — one for her to shake, and one for Mrs. Montgomery.

"Why, Mr. Dickerson!" said the landlady, "where did you spring from? You been sitting here behind us all the time?"

"I wish I had," said Dickerson. "But this seat is 'another's,' as they say on the stage; he's gone out 'to see a man,' and I'm keeping it for him. Just caught sight of you before the curtain fell. Couldn't hardly believe my eyes."

"But where *are* you? Why haven't you been round to the house?"

"Well, I'm only here for a day," said Dickerson, with a note of self-denial in his voice that Cornelia knew was meant for her, "and I thought I wouldn't disturb you. No use making so many bites of a cherry. I got in so late last night I had to go to a hotel anyway."

Mrs. Montgomery began some hospitable expostulations, but he waived them with, "Yes; that's all right. I'll remember it next time, Mrs. Montgomery," and then he began to speak of the play, and he was so funny about some things in it that he made Cornelia laugh. He took leave of them when the owner of the seat came back. He told Mrs. Montgomery he should not see her again this time; but at the end of the play they found him waiting for them at the outer door of the theatre. He skipped lightly into step with them. "Thought I might as well see you home, as they say in Pymantoning. Do' know as I shall be back for quite a while, this next trip, and we don't see much ladies' society on the road; at least, *I* don't. I'm not so easy to make acquaintance as I used to be. I suppose it was being married so long. I can't manage to help a pretty girl raise a car-window, or put her grip

into the rack, the way I could once. Fact is, there don't seem to *be* so many pretty girls as there were, or else I'm gettin' old-sighted, and can't see 'em."

He spoke to Mrs. Montgomery, but Cornelia knew he was talking at her. Now he leaned forward and addressed her across Mrs. Montgomery: "Do' know as I told you that I saw your mother in Lakeland day before yesterday, Miss Saunders."

"Oh, did you?" Cornelia eagerly besought him. The apparition of her mother rose before her; it was almost like having her actually there, to meet some one who had seen her so lately. "Was she looking well? The last letter she wrote she hadn't been very" —

"Well, I guess she's all right, now. You know *I* think your mother is about the finest woman in this world, Miss Nelie, and the prettiest-looking. I've never told you about Mrs. Saunders, have I, Mrs. Montgomery? Well, you wouldn't know but her and Miss Nelie were sisters. She looks like a girl, a little way off; and she *is* a girl, in her feelings. She's got the kindest heart, and she's the best person *I* ever saw. I tell you, it would be a different sort of a world if everybody was like Mrs. Saunders, and I should ha' been a different sort of a man if I'd always

appreciated her goodness. Well, so it goes," he said, with a sigh of indefinite regret, which availed with Cornelia because it was mixed with praise of her mother; it made her feel safer with him and more tolerant. He leaned forward again, and said across Mrs. Montgomery, as before: "She was gettin' off the train from Pymantoning, and I was just takin' my train West, but I knew it was her as soon as I saw her walk. I was half a mind to stop and speak to her, and let my train go."

Cornelia could see her mother, just how she would look, wandering sweetly and vaguely away from her train, and the vision was so delightful to her, that it made her laugh. "I guess you're mother's girl," Mrs. Montgomery interpreted, and Mr. Dickerson said:

"Well, I guess she's got a good right to be. I wasn't certain whether it was her or Miss Saunders first when I saw her, the other day."

At her door Mrs. Montgomery invited him to come in, and he said he did not know but he would for a minute, and Cornelia's gratitude for his praise of her mother kept her from leaving them at once. In the dining-room, where Mrs. Montgomery set out a lunch for him, he began to tell stories.

Cornelia had no grudge against him for the past. She was only too glad that it had all fallen out as it did; and though she still knew that he was a shameless little wretch, she did not feel so personally disgraced by him, as she had at first, when she was not sure she could make him keep his distance. He was a respite from her own thoughts, and she lingered and lingered, and listened and listened, remotely aware that it was wrong, but somehow bewildered and constrained.

Mrs. Montgomery went down to the kitchen a moment, for something more to add to the lunch, and he seized the chance to say, "I know how you feel about me, Miss Saunders, and I don't blame you. You needn't be afraid; I ain't going to trouble you. I might, if you was a different kind of girl; but I've thought it all over since I saw you, and I respect you. I hope you won't give me away to Mrs. Montgomery, but if you do, I shall respect you all the same, and I sha'n't blame you, even then." The landlady returned, and he went on, I was just tellin' Miss Saunders about my friend Bob Whiteley's railroad accident. But you've heard it so often."

"Oh, well, do go on!" said Mrs. Montgomery, setting down the plate of cold chicken she had brought back with her.

It was midnight before he rose. "I declare I could listen all night," said Mrs. Montgomery.

Cornelia could have done so, too, but she did not say it. While the talk lasted, she had a pleasure in the apt slang, and sinister wit and low wisdom, which made everything higher and nobler seem ridiculous. She tried helplessly to rise above the delight she found in it, and while she listened, she was miserably aware that she was unworthy even of the cheap respect which this amusing little wretch made a show of paying her before Mrs. Montgomery.

She loathed him, and yet she hated to have him go; for then she would be left to herself and her own thoughts. As she crept up the long stairs to her room, she asked herself if she could be the same girl who had poured tea at Mrs. Westley's, and talked to all those refined people, who seemed to admire her and make much of her, as if she were one of them. Before, she had escaped from the toils of that folly of the past by disowning it; but now, she had voluntarily made it hers. She had wilfully entangled herself in its toils; they seemed to trip her steps, and make her stumble on the stairs as if they were tangible things. She had knowingly suffered such a man as that, whose commonness of soul she had always instinctively felt, to

come back into her life, and she could never banish him again. She could never even tell any one; she was the captive of her shabby secret till he should come again and openly claim her. He would come again; there could be no doubt of that.

On the bureau before her glass lay a letter. It was from Ludlow, and it delicately expressed the hope that there had been nothing in his manner of offering to help her with her picture which made it impossible for her to accept. "I need not tell you that I think you have talent, for I have told you that before. I have flattered myself that I had a personal interest in it, because I saw it long ago, and I have been rather proud of thinking that you were making use of me. I wish you would think the matter over, and decide to go on with your picture of Miss Maybough. I promise to reduce my criticism to a minimum, for I think it is more important that you should keep on in your own way, even if you go a little wrong in it, now and then, than that you should go perfectly right in some one's else. Do let me hear from you, and say that I may come Saturday to Miss Maybough's studio, and silently see what you are doing."

In a postscript he wrote: "I am afraid that I have

offended you by something in my words or ways. If I have, won't you at least let me come and be forgiven?"

She dropped her face on the letter where it lay open before her, and stretched out her arms, and moaned in a despair that no tears even came to soften. She realized how much worse it was to have made a fool of herself than to be made a fool of.

XXIX.

THERE was only one thing for Cornelia to do now, and she did it as well as she knew how, or could hope to know without the help that she could not seek anywhere. She wrote to Ludlow and thanked him, and told him that she did not think she should go on with the picture of Charmian, for the present. She said, in the first five or six drafts of her letter, that it had been her uncertainty as to this which made her hesitate when he spoke to her, but in every form she gave this she found it false; and at last she left it out altogether, and merely assured him that she had nothing whatever to forgive him. She wished to forbid his coming to see her; she did not know quite how to do that; but either the tone of her letter was forbidding enough, or else he felt that he had done his whole duty, now, for he did not come.

With moments of utter self-abasement, she had to leave Charmian to the belief that she was distraught and captious, solely for the reason they shared the secret of, and Charmian respected this with a devotion so obvious as to be almost spectacular. Cornelia

found herself turning into a romantic heroine, and had to make such struggle against the transformation as she could in bursts of hysterical gayety. These had rather the effect of deepening Charmian's compassionate gloom, till she exhausted her possibilities in that direction and began to crave some new expression. There was no change in her affection for Cornelia; and there were times when Cornelia longed to trust her fully; she knew that it would be safe, and she did not believe that it would lower her in Charmian's eyes; but to keep the fact of her weakness altogether her own seemed the only terms on which she could bear it.

One day there came a letter from her mother out of her usual order of writing; she wrote on Sunday, and her letters reached Cornelia the next evening; but this letter came on a Wednesday morning, and the sight of it filled Cornelia with alarm, first for her mother, and then for herself; which deepened as she read:

"DEAR NIC: That good-for-nothing little scrub has been here, talken aboute you, and acting as if you was hand-and-glove with him. Now Nelie, I don't want to interfere with you anyway and I won't if you say the word. But I never felt just righte about that

fellow, and what I done long ago to make you tollerate him, and now I want to make it up to you if I can. He is a common low-down person, and he isn't fit to speake to you, and I hope you wont speake to him. The divorce, the way I look at it, dont make any difference; hese just as much married as what he ever was, and if he had never been married atoll, it wouldn't of made any difference as far as I feel about it. Now Nelie, you are old enough to take care of yourself, but I hope if that fellow ever comes around you again, you'll box his ears and be done with him. I know hes got a smooth tongue, and he can make you laugh in spite of yourselfe, but don't you have anything to do with him. MOTHER.

"P. S. I have been talken it over with Mrs. Burton, and she thinks just the way I do aboute it. She thinks you are good enough for the best, and you no need to throw yourself away on such a perfect little scamp. In haste. How is that cellebrated picture that you are painting with Mr. Ludlow getting along?"

Cornelia got this letter from the postman at Mrs. Montgomery's door, when she opened it to go out in the morning, and she read it on her way to the Synthesis. It seemed to make the air reel around her, and

step by step she felt as if she should fall. A wild anger swelled her heart, and left no room there for shame even. She wondered what abominable lies that little wretch had told; but they must have been impudent indeed to overcome her mother's life-long reluctance from writing and her well-grounded fears of spelling, so far as to make her send a letter out of the usual course. But when her first fury passed, and she began to grow weak in the revulsion, she felt only her helplessness in the presence of such audacity, and a fear that nothing could save her from him. If he could make her so far forget herself as to tolerate him, to listen to his stories, to laugh at his jokes, and show him that she enjoyed his company, after all she knew of him, then he could make her marry him, if he tried.

The logic was perfect, and it seemed but another link in the infrangible chain of events, when she found another letter waiting for her at the office of the Synthesis. It bore the postmark of Lakeland, of the same date as her mother's, and in the corner of the envelope the business card of Gates & Clarkson, Dealers in Art Goods; J. B. Dickerson, in a line of fine print at the top was modestly "with" them.

The address, "Dear friend," was written over something else which had been rubbed out, but beyond

this the letter ran fluently and uninterruptedly along in a hand which had a business-like directness and distinctness. "I don't know," the writer said, "as you expected to hear from me, and I don't know as I expected to let you, but circumstances alter cases, and I just wanted to drop you a line and tell you that I have been in Pymantoning and seen your mother. She is looking prime, and younger than ever. We had a long talk about old times, and I told her what a mistake I made. Confession is good for the soul, they say, and I took a big dose of it; I guess I confessed pretty much everything; regular Topsey style. Well, your mother didn't spare me any, and I don't know but what she was about right. The fact is, a man on the road don't think as much about his p's and q's as he ought as long as he is young, and if I made a bad break in that little matrimonial venture of mine, I guess it was no more than I deserved to. I told your mother just how I happened to meet you again, and how the sight of you was enough to make another man of me. I was always a little too much afraid of you, or it might have turned out different; but I can appreciate a character like yours, and I want you to know it. I guess your mother sized it up about right when I said all I asked was to worship you at a distance, and

she said she guessed you would look out for the *distance*. I told her you had, up to date. I want you to understand that I don't presume on anything, and if we seemed to have a pretty good time after the theatre, the other night, it was because you didn't want to spoil Mrs. Montgomery's fun, and treated me well just because I was a friend of hers. Well, it's pretty hard to realize that my life is ruined, and that I have got nobody but myself to thank for it, but I guess that's what I've got to come to, sooner or later. It's what your mother said, and I guess she was right; she didn't spare me a bit, and I didn't want her to. I knew she would write to you, as soon as I was gone, and tell you not to have anything to do with me; and if she has, all I have got to say is, *all right*. I have been a bad lot, and I don't deny it, and all I can ask now, from this time forward, is to be kept from doing any more mischief. I don't know as I shall ever see you again; I had a kind of presentiment I shouldn't, and I told your mother so. I don't know but I told a little more about how kind you were to me the other evening than what the facts would justify exactly, but as sure as you live I didn't *mean* to lie about it. If I exaggerated any, it was because it seemed the greatest thing in the world to me, just to talk to you, and be

where I could see you smile, and hear you laugh; you've got a laugh that is like a child's, or an angel's, if angels laugh. I've heard of their weeping, and if you knew my whole life, I think you would shed a tear or two over me. But that is not what I am trying to get at; I want to explain that if I appeared to brag of being tolerated by you, and made it seem any thing more than toleration, it was because it was like heaven to me not to have you give me the grand bounce again. And what I want to ask you now, is just to let me write to you, every now and then, and when I am tempted to go wrong, anyways — and a business life is full of temptations — let me put the case before you, and have you set me right. I won't want but a word from you, and most part of the time, I shall just want to free my mind to you on life in general, and won't expect any answer. I feel as if you had got my soul in your hands, and you could save it, or throw it away. That is all. I am writing on the train, and I have to use pencil. I hope you'll excuse the stationery; it's all the porter could get me, and I'm anxious to have a letter go back to you at once. I know your mother has written to you, and I want to corroborate everything she says against me."

The letter covered half-a-dozen telegraph blanks,

and filled them full, so that the diffident suggestion, "My permanent address is with Gates & Clarkson," had to be written along the side of the first page.

The low cunning, the impudent hypocrisy, the leering pretence of reverence, the affectation of penitence, the whole fraudulent design, so flimsy that the writer himself seemed to be mocking at it, was open to Cornelia, and she read the letter through with distinct relief. Whatever the fascinations of Mr. Dickerson were when he was personally at hand, he had none at a distance, and when she ran over the pages a second time, it was with a laugh, which she felt sure he would have joined her in, if he had been there. It turned her tragedy into farce so completely, for the time, that she went through her morning's work with a pleasure and a peace of mind which she had not felt for many days. It really seemed such a joke, that she almost yielded to the temptation of showing passages of the letter to Charmian; and she forebore only because she would have had to tell more than she cared to have any one know of Mr. Dickerson, if she did. She had a right to keep all that from those who had no right to know it, but she had no right, or if she had the right, she had not the power to act as if the past had never been. She set herself to bear what

was laid upon her, and if she was ever to have strength for her burden she must begin by owning her weakness. There was no one to whom she could own it but her mother, and she did this fully as soon as she got back to her room, and could sit down to answer her letter. She enclosed Dickerson's, and while she did not spare him, she took the whole blame upon herself, for she said she might have known that if she suffered him to see that he amused her or pleased her at all, he was impudent enough to think that he could make her like him again. "And mother," she wrote, "you know I never really liked him, and was only too glad to get rid of him; you know that much. But I suppose you will wonder, then, why I ever let him speak to me if I really despised him as much as ever; and that is not easy to explain. For one thing he was with Mrs. Montgomery, and she likes him, and she has always been so good to me that I hated to treat him badly before her; but that is not the real reason, and I am not going to pretend it was. You know yourself how funny he is, and can make you laugh in spite of yourself, but it was not that, either. It was because I was angry with myself for having been angry with some one else, without a cause, as I can see it now, and I had made a fool of myself, and I wanted to get

away from myself. I cannot tell you just how it was, yet, and I do not know as I ever can, but that was truly it, and nothing else, though the other things had something to do with it. I suppose it was just like men when they take a drink of whiskey to make them forget. The worst of it all is, and the discouraging part is, that it shows me I have not changed a particle. My temper is just as bad as ever, and I might as well be back at sixteen, for all the sense I've got. Sometimes it seems to me that the past is all there is of us, anyway. It seems to come up in me, all the time, and I am so ashamed I don't know what to do. I make all kinds of good resolutions, and I want to be good, and then comes something and it is all over with me. Then, it appears as if it was not me, altogether, that is to blame. I know I was to blame, this last time, laughing at that little 'scrub's' jokes as you call him, and behaving like a fool; but I don't see how I was to blame for his coming back into my life, when I never really wanted him at all, and certainly never wished to set eyes on him again.

"I don't suppose it would be the least use to ask you not to show this letter to Mrs. Burton, and I won't, but if you do, I wish you would ask her what she thinks it means, and whether it's fate, or foreordination, or *what*."

Mrs. Saunders carried Cornelia's letter to Mrs. Burton, as Cornelia had foreseen, but the question she put to her was not the abstraction the girl had suggested. "Mrs. Burton," she asked, "who was it do you suppose Nic was so mad with that she had to go off and play the fool, that way?"

Mrs. Burton passed the point of casuistry too. "Well, of course I don't know, Mrs. Saunders. Has she said anything about Mr. Ludlow lately?"

"No, she hain't said a word, and that seems suspicious. She said a week or two ago that he had give up trying to paint that Maybough girl, and that she guessed she had got the last of her lessons from him; but she didn't seem much troubled about it. But I guess by her not wantin' to tell, it's him. What do you suppose he did to provoke her?"

"Oh, just some young people's nonsense, probably. It'll come all right. You needn't worry about it, because if it won't come right of itself, he'll *make* it come."

"Oh, I'm not worrying about that," said Mrs. Saunders, "I'm worrying about this." She gave her the letter Cornelia had enclosed, and as Mrs. Burton began to read it she said, "If that fellow keeps on writing to her, I don't know what I *will* do."

XXX.

Ludlow did not come to see Cornelia, but they met, from time to time, at Mrs. Westley's, where he was aware of her being rather taken up; at Mrs. Maybough's, where he found it his duty to show himself after his failure with Charmian's picture, so as to help Mrs. Maybough let people know there was nothing but the best feeling about it; and, more to his surprise, at Wetmore's. At the painter's, Charmian, who came with her, realized more than anywhere else, her dream of Bohemia, and Wetmore threw a little excess into the social ease of his life that he might fulfil her ideal. He proposed that Mrs. Wetmore should set the example of hilarities that her domestic spirit abhorred; he accused her of cutting off his beer, and invented conditions of insolvency and privation that surpassed Charmian's wildest hopes. He borrowed money of Ludlow in her presence, and said that he did not know that he should ever be able to pay it back. He planned roystering escapades which were never put in

effect, and once he really went out with the two girls to the shop of an old German, on the Avenue, who dealt in *delicatessen*, and bought some Nuremberg gingerbread and a bottle of lime-juice, after rejecting all the ranker meats and drinks as unworthy the palates of true Bohemians. He invited Charmian to take part in various *bats*, for the purpose of shocking the Pymantoning propriety of Cornelia, and they got such fun out of it as children do when the make-believe of their elders has been thinned to the most transparent pretence; but Charmian, who knew he was making fun of her, remained as passionately attached to the ideal he mocked as ever; and Cornelia had the guilty pang of wondering what he would think of her if he knew all about Mr. Dickerson, whose nature she now perceived to be that of the vulgarest *batting*.

She did not answer the letter she first got, nor any of those which immediately followed, and this had the effect of checking Mr. Dickerson's ardor for so long a time that she began to think he would not trouble her again.

There was no real offence between her and Ludlow, or any but such as could wear itself away with time and the custom of friendly meeting. He had the magnanimity to ignore it when he first saw her after

that Thursday of Mrs. Westley's, and she had too keen a sense of having been a fool not to wish to act more wisely as soon as she could forget. There came so long a lapse between the letters of Mr. Dickerson that he ceased, at least perpetually, to haunt her thoughts. She had moments when it seemed as if she might justly consent to be happy again, or at least allow herself to enjoy the passing pleasure of the time without blame. She even suffered herself to fancy taking up the picture of Charmian, and carrying it farther under Ludlow's criticism. She was very ambitious to try her fate with the Academy, and when he offered so generously to help her again, as if she had not refused him once so rudely, she could not deny him. She found herself once more in Charmian's studio, and it all began to go on the same as if it had never stopped. It seemed like a dream, sometimes, when she thought about it, and it did not seem like a very wise dream. Cornelia now wished, above all things, to have a little bit of sense, as she phrased it in her thoughts; and she was aware that the present position of affairs might look rather crazy to some people. The best excuse for it was that it would have looked crazier yet if she had refused such an opportunity simply because of the circumstances. She began

to be a little vague about the circumstances, and whether they were queer because she had fancied a likeness of herself in Mr. Ludlow's picture of Charmian, or because she had afterwards made a fool of herself so irreparably as to be unworthy Mr. Ludlow's kindness.

If it was merely kindness, and she was the object of charity, it was all right; she could accept it on those terms. She even tempted him to patronize her, but when he ventured upon something elderly and paternal in his monitions, she resented it so fiercely that she was astonished and ashamed. There was an inconsistency in it all that was perplexing, but not so perplexing as to spoil the pleasure of it.

There were not sittings every day, now; Ludlow came once or twice a week, and criticised her work; sometimes he struck off a sketch himself, in illustration of a point, and these sketches were now so unlike Cornelia, and so wholly like Charmian, that when he left them for her guidance, she studied them with a remote ache in her heart. "Never mind," Charmian consoled her once, "he just does it on purpose."

"Does what?" Cornelia demanded awfully.

"Oh, nothing!"

One of the sketches he fancied so much that he be-

gan to carry it forward. He worked at it whenever he came, and under his hand it grew an idealized Charmian, in which her fantastic quality expressed itself as high imagination, and her formless generosity as a wise and noble magnanimity.

She made fun of it when they were alone, but Cornelia could see that she was secretly proud of having inspired it, and that she did not really care for the constant portrait which Cornelia had been faithfully finishing up, while Ludlow changed and experimented, though Charmian praised her to his disadvantage.

One day he said he had carried his picture as far as he could, and he should let it go at that. It seemed an end of their pleasant days together; the two girls agreed that now there could be no further excuse for their keeping on, and Cornelia wondered how she could let him know that she understood. That evening he came to call on her at Mrs. Montgomery's, and before he sat down he began to say: "I want to ask your advice, Miss Saunders, about what I shall do with my sketch of Miss Maybough."

Cornelia blenched, for no reason that she could think of; she could not gasp out the "Yes" that she tried to utter.

"You see," he went on, "I know that I've disap-

pointed Mrs. Maybough, and I'd like to make her some sort of reparation, but I can't offer her the sketch instead of the portrait; if she liked it she would want to pay for it, and I can't take money for it. So I've thought of giving the sketch to Miss Maybough."

He looked at Cornelia, now, for the advice he had asked, but she did not speak, and he had to say: "But I don't know whether she likes it or not. Do you know whether she does? Has she ever spoken of it to you? Of course she's said civil things to me about it. I beg your pardon! I suppose you don't care to tell, and I had no right to inquire."

"Oh, yes; yes."

"Well?"

"I know she likes it; she must."

"But she hasn't said so?"

"Not — exactly."

"Then what makes you think she does?"

"I don't know. Any one would. It's very beautiful." Cornelia spoke very dryly, very coldly.

"But is it a likeness? Is it she? Her character? What do *you* think of it yourself?"

"I don't know as I can say" —

"Ah, I see you don't like it!" said Ludlow, with

an air of disappointment. "And yet I aimed at pleasing you in it."

"At pleasing *me?*" she murmured thickly back.

"Yes, you. I tried to see her as you do; to do her justice, and if it is overdone, or flattered, or idealized, it is because I've been working toward your notion" —

"Oh!" said Cornelia, and then, to the great amazement of herself as well as Ludlow, she began to laugh, and she laughed on, with her face in her handkerchief. When she took her handkerchief down, her eyes looked strange, but she asked, with a sort of radiance, "And did you think I thought Charmian was really like that?"

"Why, I didn't know — You've been very severe with me when I've suggested she wasn't. At first, when I wanted to do her as Humbug, you wouldn't stand it, and now, when I've done her as Mystery, you laugh."

Cornelia pressed her handkerchief to her shining eyes, and laughed a little more. "That is because she isn't either. Can't you understand?"

"I could understand her being both, I think. Don't you think she's a little of both?"

"I told you," said Cornelia gravely, "that I didn't like to talk Charmian over."

"That was a good while ago. I didn't know but you might, by this time."

"Why?" she asked. "Am I so changeable?"

"No; you're the one constant and steadfast creature in a world of variableness. I didn't really expect that. I know that I can always find you where I left you. You are the same as when I first saw you."

It seemed to Cornelia that she had been asking him to praise her, and she was not going to have that. "Do you mean that I behave as badly as I did in the Fair House? No wonder you treat me like a child." This was not at all what she meant to say, however, and was worse than what she had said before.

"No," he answered seriously. "I meant that you are not capricious, and I hate caprice. But do I treat you like a child?"

"Sometimes," said Cornelia, looking down and feeling silly.

"I am very sorry. I wish you would tell me how."

She had not expected this pursuit, and she flashed back, "You are doing it now! You wouldn't say that to — to — any one else."

Ludlow paused thoughtfully. Then he said, "I

seem to treat myself like a child when I am with you. Perhaps that's what displeases you. Well, I can't help that. It is because you are so true that I can't keep up the conventions with you." They were both silent; Cornelia was trying to think what she should say, and he added, irrelevantly, "If you don't like that sketch of her, I won't give it to her."

"I? What have I to do with it?" She did not know what they were talking about, or to what end. "Yes, you must give it to her. I know she wants it. And I know how kind you are, and good. I didn't mean — I didn't wish to blame you — I don't know why I'm making such a *perfect* fool of myself."

She had let him have her hand somehow, and he was keeping it; but they had both risen.

"May I stay a moment?" he entreated.

No one thing now seemed more inconsequent than another, and Cornelia answered, with a catching of her breath, but as if it quite followed, "Why, certainly," and they both sat down again.

"There is something I wish to tell — to speak of," he began. "I think it's what you mean. In my picture of Miss Maybough"—

"I didn't mean that at all. That doesn't make any difference to me," she broke incoherently in upon him.

"I didn't care for it. You can do what you please with it."

He looked at her in a daze while she spoke. "Oh," he said, "I am very stupid. I didn't mean this sketch of mine; I don't care for that, now. I meant that other picture of her — the last one — the one I painted out before I gave up painting her — Did you see that it was like you?"

Cornelia felt that he was taking an advantage of her, and she lifted her eyes indignantly. "Mr. Ludlow!"

"Ah! Don't think *that*," he pleaded, and she knew that he meant her unexpressed sense of unfairness in him. "I know you saw it; and the likeness was there because — I wanted to tell you long ago, but I couldn't, because when we met afterwards I was afraid that I was mistaken in what I thought — hoped. I had no right to know anything till I was sure of myself; but — the picture was like you because you were all the time in my thoughts, and nothing and no one but you. Cornelia"— She rose up crazily, and looked toward the door, as if she were going to run out of the room. "What is it?" he implored. "You know I love you."

"Let me go!" she panted.

"If you tell me you don't care for me" —

"I don't! I don't care for you, and — let me go!"

He stood flushed and scared before her. "I — I am sorry. I didn't mean — I hoped — But it is all right — I mean you are right, and I am wrong. I am very wrong."

Court only

XXXI.

LUDLOW stood aside and Cornelia escaped. When she reached her own room, she had a sense of her failure to take formal leave of him, and she mechanically blamed herself for that before she blamed herself for anything else. At first he was altogether to blame, and she heaped the thought of him with wild reproach and injury; if she had behaved like a fool, it was because she was trapped into it, and could not help it; she had to do so. She recalled distinctly, amidst the turmoil, how she had always kept in mind that a girl who had once let a man, like that dreadful little wretch, whose name she could not take into her consciousness, suppose that she could care for him, could not let a man like Ludlow care for her. If she did, she was wicked, and she knew she had not done it for she had been on her guard against it. The reasoning was perfect, and if he had spoiled everything now, he had himself to thank for it; and she did not pity him. Still she wished she had not run

out of the room; she wished she had behaved with more dignity, and not been rude; he could laugh at her for that; it was like her behavior with him from the very beginning; there was something in him that always made her behave badly with him, like a petulant child. He would be glad to forget her; he would believe, now, that she was not good enough for him; and he might laugh; but at least he could not say that she had ever done or said the least thing to let him suppose that she cared for him. If she had, she should not forgive herself, and she should pity him as much as she blamed him now. There was nothing in her whole conduct that would have warranted her in supposing such a thing, if she were a man. Cornelia had this comfort, and she clung to it, till it flashed through her that not being a man, she could not imagine what the things were that could let a man suppose it. She had never thought of that before, and it dazed her. Perhaps he had seen all along that she did care for him, that he had known it in some way unknown and forever unknowable to her; the way a man knows; and all her disguises had availed nothing against him. Then, if he had known, he had acted very deceitfully and very wrongfully, and nothing could excuse him unless there had been other

signs that a girl would recognize, too. That would excuse him, it would justify him, and she tried to see the affair with another woman's eyes. She tried to see it with Charmian's eyes, but she knew they were filled with a romantic iridescence that danced before them and wrapt it in a rainbow mist. Then she tried Mrs. Westley's eyes, which she knew were friendly to both Ludlow and herself, and she told her everything in her impassioned revery: all about that little wretch: all about the first portrait of Charmian and the likeness they had seen in it; all about what had happened since Ludlow began to criticise her work again. In the mere preparation for this review she found another's agency insufferable; she abandoned herself wildly to a vision which burned itself upon her in mass and detail, under a light that searched motive and conduct alike, and left her no refuge from the truth. Then she perceived, how at every moment since they began those last lessons at Charmain's he must have believed she cared for him and wished him to care for her. If she had not seen it too, it was because she was stupid, and she was to blame all the same. She was blind to what he saw in her, and she had thought because she was hidden from herself that she was hidden from him.

It was not a question now of whether she cared for him, or not; that was past all question; but whether she had not led him on to think she did, and she owned that down to the last moment before he had spoken, wittingly or unwittingly she had coaxed him to praise her, to console her, to make love to her. She was rightly punished, and she was ready to suffer, but she could not let him suffer the shame of thinking himself wrong. That was mean, that was cowardly, and whatever she was, Cornelia was not base, and not afraid. She would have been willing to follow him into the night, to go to his door, and knock at it, and when he came, flash out at him, "I did love you, I do love you," and then run, she did not know where, but somewhere out of the world. But he might not be there, or some one else might come to the door; the crude, material difficulties denied her the fierce joy of this exploit, but she could not rest (she should never really rest again) till she had done the nearest thing to it that she could. She looked at the little busy-bee clock ticking away on her bureau and saw that it was half-past eleven o'clock, and that there was no time to lose, and she sat down and wrote: "I did care for you. But I can never see you again. I cannot tell you the reason."

She drew a deep breath when the thing was done, and hurried the scrap unsigned into an envelope and addressed it to Ludlow. She was in a frenzy till she could get it out of her hands and into the postal-box beyond recall. She pulled a shawl over her head and flew down stairs and out of the door into the street toward the postal-box on the corner. But before she reached it she thought of a special-delivery stamp, which should carry the letter to Ludlow the first thing in the morning, and she pushed on to the druggist's at the corner beyond to get it. She was aware of the man staring at her, as if she had asked for arsenic; and she supposed she must have looked strange. This did not come into her mind till she found herself again at Mrs. Montgomery's door, where she stood in a panic ecstasy at having got rid of the letter, which the special stamp seemed to make still more irrevocable, and tried to fit her night-latch into the lock. The cat, which had been shut out, crept up from the area, and rubbed with a soft insinuation against her skirt. She gave a little shriek of terror, and the door was suddenly pulled open from within.

She threw back her shawl from her head, and under the low-burning gas-light held aloft by the spelter statuette in the newel post, she confronted Mr. Dick-

erson. He had his hat on, and had the air of just having let himself in; his gripsack stood at his feet.

"Why, Nelie! Miss Saunders! Is that you? Why, where in the world — Well, this *is* something like 'Willy, we have missed you'; I've just come. What was the matter out there? Somebody trying to scare you? Well, there's nothing to be afraid of now, anyway. How you do pant! But it becomes you. Yes, it does! You look now just like I've seen you all the time I've been gone! You didn't answer any of my letters; I don't know as I could have expected any different. But I did hope — Nelie, it's no use! I've got to speak out, and it's now or never; maybe there won't be another chance. Look here, my girl! I *want* you — I love you, Nic! and I always d" —

He had got her hand, and he was drawing her toward him. She struggled to free herself, but he pulled her closer.

Her heart swelled with a fury of grief for all she had suffered and lost through him. She thought of what her mother had said she ought to do if he ever spoke to her again; there came without her agency, almost, three swift, sharp, electrical blows from the hand she had freed; she saw him reeling backward

with his hand at his face, and then she was standing in her own room, looking at her ghost in the glass.

Now, if Mr. Ludlow knew, he would surely despise her, and she wished she were dead indeed: not so much because she had boxed Dickerson's ears as because she had done what obliged her to do it.

XXXII.

It is hard for the young to understand that the world which seems to stop with their disaster is going on with smooth indifference, and that a little time will carry them so far from any fateful event that when they gather courage to face it they will find it curiously shrunken in the perspective. Nothing really stops the world but death, and that only for the dead. If we live, we must move on, we must change, we must outwear every motion, however poignant or deep. Cornelia's shame failed to kill her; she woke the next morning with a self-loathing that seemed even greater than that of the night before, but it was actually less; and it yielded to the strong will which she brought to bear upon herself. She went to her work at the Synthesis as if nothing had happened, and she kept at it with a hard, mechanical faithfulness which she found the more possible, perhaps, because Charmian was not there, for some reason, and she had not her sympathy as well as her own weakness to manage. She surprised herself with the results of her pitiless industry,

and realized for the first time the mysterious duality of being, in the power of the brain and the hand to toil while the heart aches.

She was glad, she kept assuring herself, that she had put an end to all hope from Ludlow; she rejoiced bitterly that now, however she had disgraced herself in her violent behavior, she had at least disgraced no one else. No one else could suffer through any claim upon her, or kindness for her, or had any right to feel ashamed of her or injured by her. But Cornelia was at the same time puzzled and perplexed with herself, and dismayed with the slightness of her hold upon impulses of hers which she thought she had overcome and bound forever. She made the discovery, which she was yet far too young to formulate, that she had a temperament to deal with that could at any time shake to ruins the character she had so carefully built upon it, and had so wholly mistaken for herself. In the midst of this dismay she made another discovery, and this was that perhaps even her temperament was not what she had believed it, but was still largely unknown to her. She had always known that she was quick and passionate, but she certainly had not supposed that she was capable of the meanness of wondering whether Mr. Ludlow would take her note as less

final than she had meant it, and would perhaps seek some explanation of it. No girl that she ever heard or read of, had ever fallen quite so low as to hope that; but was not she hoping just that? Perhaps she had even written those words with the tacit intention of calling him back! But this conjecture was the mere play of a morbid fancy, and weak as she was, Cornelia had the strength to forbid it and deny it.

At the end of the afternoon, she pretended that she ought to go and see what had happened to Charmian, and on the way, she had time to recognize her own hypocrisy, and to resolve that she would do penance for it by coming straight at the true reason of her errand. She was sent to Charmian in her studio, and she scarcely gave her a chance to explain that she had staid at home on account of a cold, and had written a note for Cornelia to come to dinner with her, which she would find when she got back.

Cornelia said, "I want to tell you something, Charmian, and I want you to tell me what you really think — whether I've done right, or not."

Charmian's eyes lightened. "Wait a moment!" She got a piece of the lightwood, and put it on the fire which she had kindled on the hearth to keep the spring chill off, and went and turned Ludlow's sketch

of herself to the wall. "I know it's about him." Then she came and crouched on the tiger-skin at Cornelia's feet, and clasped her hands around her knees, and fixed her averted face on the blazing pine. "Now go on," she said, as if she had arranged the pose to her perfect satisfaction.

Cornelia went on. "It's about him, and it's about some one else, too," and she had no pity on herself in telling Charmian all about that early, shabby affair with Dickerson.

"I knew it," said Charmian, with a sigh of utter content, "I *told* you, the first time I saw you, that *you* had lived. Well: and has he — turned up?"

"He has turned up — three times," said Cornelia.

Charmian shivered with enjoyment of the romantic situation. She reached a hand behind her and tried to clutch one of Cornelia's but had to get on without it. "And well: have they met?"

"No, they haven't," said Cornelia crossly, but not so much with Charmian as with the necessity she was now in of telling her about her last meeting with Ludlow. She began, "They almost did," and when Charmian in the intensity of her interest could not keep turning around to stare at her, Cornelia took hold of her head and turned her face toward the fire again.

Then she went on to tell how it had all happened. She did not spare herself at any point, and she ended the story with the expression of her belief that she had deserved it all. "It wasn't boxing that little wretch's ears that was the disgrace; it was having brought myself to where I *had* to box them."

"Yes, that was it," sighed Charmian, with deep conviction.

"And I had to tell *him* that I could never care for him, because I couldn't bear to tell him what a fool I had been."

"No, no; you never could do that!"

"And I couldn't bear to have him think I was better than I really was, or let him care for me unless I told him all about that miserable old affair."

"No, *you* couldn't, Cornelia," said Charmian solemnly. "*Some* girls might; *most* girls *would*. They would just consider it a flirtation, and not say anything about it, or not till after they were engaged, and then just laugh. But you are different from other girls — you are so *true!* Yes, you would have to tell it if it killed you; I can see that; and you couldn't tell it, and you had to break his heart. Yes, you *had* to!"

"Oh, Charmian Maybough! How cruel you are!"

Cornelia flung herself forward and cried; Charmian whirled round, and kneeling before her, threw her arms around her, in a pose of which she felt the perfection, and kissed her tenderly.

"Why didn't you let me see how you were looking? How I have gone on" —

Cornelia pulled herself loose. "Charmian! Do you *dare* to mean that I want him to ever speak to me again — or look at me?"

"No, no" —

"Or that I'm sorry I did it?"

"No; it's this cold that's making me so stupid."

"If he were to come back again this instant, I should have to tell him just the same, or else tell him about that — that — and you know I couldn't do that if I lived a thousand years."

Now she melted, indeed, and suffered Charmian to moan over her, and fortify her with all the reasons she had urged herself in various forms of repetition. Charmain showèd her again how impossible everything that she had thought impossible was, and convinced her of every conviction. She made Cornelia's tragedy her romance, and solemnly exulted in its fatality, while she lifted her in her struggle of conscience to a height from which for the present at least, Cornelia

could not have descended without a ruinous loss of self-respect. In the renunciation in which the worshipper confirmed her saint, Ludlow and his rights and feelings were ignored, and Cornelia herself was offered nothing more substantial than the prospect that henceforth she and Charmian could live for each other in a union that should be all principle on one side and all adoration on the other.

XXXIII.

Cornelia did not go to pass that week in Lent with Mrs. Westley. When she went, rather tardily, to withdraw her promise, she said that the time was now growing so short she must give every moment to the Synthesis. Mrs. Westley tacitly arranged to cancel some little plans she had made for her, and in the pity a certain harassed air of the girl's moved in her, she accepted her excuses as valid, and said, "But I am afraid you are overworking at the Synthesis, Miss Saunders. Are you feeling quite well?"

"Oh, perfectly," Cornelia answered with a false buoyancy from which she visibly fell. She looked down, and said, "I wish the work was twice as hard!"

"Ah, you have come to that very soon," said Mrs. Westley; and then they were both silent, till she added, "How are you getting on with your picture of Miss Maybough?"

"Oh, I'm not doing anything with that," said Cornelia, and she stood up to go.

"But you are going to exhibit it?" Mrs. Westley persisted.

"No, I don't know as I am. I should have to offer it first."

"It would be sure to be accepted; Mr. Ludlow thinks it would."

"Oh, yes; I know," said Cornelia, feeling herself get very red. "But I guess I won't offer it. Good-bye."

Mrs. Westley kept the impression of something much more personal than artistic in Cornelia's reference to her picture, and when she met Ludlow a few days after, she asked him if he knew that Miss Saunders was not going to offer her picture to the Exhibition.

He said simply that he did not know it.

"Don't you think she ought? I don't think she's looking very well, of late; do you?"

"I don't know; isn't she? I haven't seen her"— He began carelessly; he added anxiously, "When did you see her?"

"A few days ago. She came to say she could not take the time from the Synthesis to pay me that little visit. I'm afraid she's working too hard. Of course, she's very ambitious; but I can't understand her not wanting to show her picture, there, and trying to sell it."

Ludlow stooped forward and pulled the long ears of Mrs. Westley's fashionable dog which lay on the rug at his feet.

"Have you any idea why she's changed her mind?"

"Yes," said Ludlow. "I think it's because I helped her with it."

"Is she so independent? Or perhaps I am not quite discreet" —

"Why not? You say she didn't look well?"

"She looked — worried."

He asked, as if it immediately followed, "Mrs. Westley, should you mind giving me a little advice about a matter — a very serious matter?"

"If you won't follow it."

"Do we ever?"

"Well?"

"How much use can a man be to a girl when he knows that he can't be of the greatest?"

"None, if he is sure."

"He is perfectly sure."

"He had better let her alone, then. He had better not try."

"I am going to try. But I thank you for your advice more than if I were going to take it."

They parted laughing; and Mrs. Westley was con-

tented to be left with the mystery which she believed was no mystery to her.

Ludlow went home and wrote to Cornelia:

"DEAR MISS SAUNDERS: I hear you are not going to try to get your picture into the Exhibition. I will not pretend not to understand why, and you would not wish me to; so I feel free to say that you are making a mistake. You ought to offer your picture; I think it would be accepted, and you have no right to forego the chance it would give you, for the only reason you can have. I know that Mr. Wetmore would be glad to advise you about it; and I am sure you will believe that I have not asked him to do so.

Yours sincerely,

W. LUDLOW."

Cornelia turned this letter in many lights, and tried to take it in many ways; but in the end she could only take it in the right way, and she wrote back:

"DEAR MR. LUDLOW: I thank you very much for your letter, and I am going to do what you say.

Yours sincerely,

CORNELIA SAUNDERS.

"P. S. I do appreciate your kindness very much."

She added this postscript after trying many times to write a reply that would seem less blunt and dry; but she could not write anything at all between a letter that she felt was gushing and this note which certainly could not be called so; she thought the postscript did not help it much, but she let it go.

As soon as she had done so, it seemed to her that she had no reason for having done so, and she did not see how she could justify it to Charmian, whom she had told that she should not offer her picture. She would have to say that she had changed her mind simply because Mr. Ludlow had bidden her, and she tried to think how she could make that appear sufficient. But Charmian was entirely satisfied. "Oh, yes," she said, "that was the least you could do, when he asked you. You certainly owed him *that* much. *Now*," she added mystically, "he never can say a *thing*."

They were in Charmian's studio, where Cornelia's sketch of her had been ever since she left working on it; and Charmian ran and got it, and set it where they could both see it in the light of the new event.

"It's magnificent, Cornelia. There's no other word for it. Did you know he was going to give me his?"

"Yes, he told me he was going to," said Cornelia, looking at her sketch, with a dreamy suffusion of happiness in her face.

"It's glorious, but it doesn't come within a million miles of yours. Mr. Wetmore isn't on the Committee, this year, but he knows them all, and" —

Cornelia turned upon her. "Charmian Maybough, if you breathe, if you *dream* a word to him about it I will never speak to you. If my picture can't get into the Exhibition without the help of friends" —

"Oh, *I* shan't speak to him about it," Charmian hastened to assure her. In pursuance of her promise, she only spoke to Mrs. Wetmore, and at the right time Wetmore used his influence with the committee. Then, for the reason, or the no reason that governs such matters, or because Cornelia's picture was no better than too many others that were accepted, it was refused.

XXXIV.

THE blow was not softened to Cornelia by her having prophesied to Charmian as well as to herself, that she knew her picture would be refused. Now she was aware that at the bottom of her heart she had always hoped and believed it would be accepted. She had kept it all from her mother, but she had her fond, proud visions of how her mother would look when she got her letter saying that she had a picture in the Exhibition, and how she would throw on her sacque and bonnet, and run up to Mrs. Burton for an explanation and full sense of the honor. In these fancies Cornelia even had them come to New York, to see her picture in position; it was not on the line, of course, and yet it was not skyed.

Her pride was not involved, and she suffered no sting of wounded vanity from its rejection: her hurt was in a tenderer place. She would not have cared how many people knew of her failure, if her mother and Mrs. Burton need not have known; but she wrote faithfully home of it, and tried to make neither much

nor little of it. She forbade Charmian the indignation which she would have liked to vent, but she let her cry over the event with her. No one else knew that it had actually happened except Wetmore and Ludlow; she was angry with them at first for encouraging her to offer the picture, but Wetmore came and was so mystified and humbled by its refusal, that she forgave him and even comforted him for his part in the affair.

"She acted like a little man about it," he reported to Ludlow. "She'll do. When a girl can take a blow like that the way she does, she makes you wish that more fellows were girls. When I had my first picture refused, it laid me up. But I'm not going to let this thing rest. I'm going to see if that picture can't be got into the American Artists'."

"Better not," said Ludlow so vaguely that Wetmore thought he must mean something.

"Why?"

"Oh — I don't believe she'd like it."

"What makes you think so? Have you seen her?"

"No" —

"You haven't? Well, Ludlow, *I* didn't lose any time. Perhaps you think there was no one else to blame for the mortification of that poor child."

"No, I don't. I am to blame, too. I encouraged her to try — I urged her."

"Then I should think you would go and tell her so."

"Ah, I think she knows it. If I told her anything, I should tell her no one was to blame but myself."

"Well, that wouldn't be a bad idea." Wetmore lighted his pipe. "Confound those fellows! I should like to knock their heads together. If there is anything like the self-righteousness of a committee when it's wrong — but there isn't, fortunately."

It was not the first time that Ludlow had faltered in the notion of going to Cornelia and claiming to be wholly at fault. In thought he was always doing it, and there were times when he almost did it in reality, but he let these times pass effectless, hoping for some better time when the thing would do itself, waiting for the miracle which love expects, when it is itself the miracle that brings all its desires to fulfilment. He certainly had some excuses for preferring a passive part in what he would have been so glad to have happen. Cornelia had confessed that she had once cared for him, but at the same time she had implied that she cared for him no longer, and she had practically forbidden him to see her again. Much study of her

words could make nothing else of them, and it was not until Ludlow saw his way to going impersonally in his quality of mistaken adviser, from whom explanation and atonement were due, that he went to Cornelia. Even then he did not quite believe that she would see him, and he gladly lost the bet he made himself, at the sound of a descending step on the stairs, that it was the Irish girl coming back to say that Miss Saunders was not at home.

They met very awkwardly, and Ludlow had such an official tone in claiming responsibility for having got Cornelia to offer her picture, and so have it rejected, that he hardly knew who was talking. "That is all," he said, stiffly; and he rose and stood looking into his hat. "It seemed to me that I couldn't do less than come and say this, and I hope you don't feel that I'm — I'm unwarranted in coming."

"Oh, no," cried Cornelia, "it's very kind of you, and no one's to blame but me. I don't suppose I should care; only" — she bit her lips hard, and added deep in her throat — "I hated to have my mother — But I am rightfully punished."

She meant for the Dickerson business, but Ludlow thought she meant for her presumption, and his heart smote him in tender indignation as her head sank and

her face averted itself. It touched him keenly that she should speak to him in that way of her mother, as if from an instinctive sense of his loving and faithful sympathy; and then, somehow he had her in his arms, there in Mrs. Montgomery's dim parlor; he noted, as in a dream, that his hat had fallen and was rolling half the length of it.

"Oh, wait!" cried the girl. "What are you doing — You don't know. There is something I must tell you — that will make you hate me" — She struggled to begin somehow, but she did not know where.

"No," he said. "You needn't tell me anything. There isn't anything in the world that could change me to you — nothing that you could tell me! Sometime, if you must — if you wish; but not now. I've been too miserable, and now I'm so happy."

"But it's very foolish, it's silly! I tell you" —

"Not now, not now!" He insisted. He made her cry, he made her laugh; but he would not listen to her. She knew it was all wrong, that it was romantic and fantastic, and she was afraid of it; but she was so happy too, that she could not will it for the moment to be otherwise. She put off the time that must come, or let him put it off for her, and gladly

lost herself in the bliss of the present. The fear, growing more and more vague and formless, haunted her rapture, but even this ceased before they parted, and left her at perfect peace in his love — their love.

He told her how much she could be to him, how she could supplement him in every way where he was faltering and deficient, and he poured out his heart in praises of her that made her brain reel. They talked of a thousand things, touching them, and leaving them, and coming back, but always keeping within the circle of their relation to themselves. They flattered one another with the tireless and credulous egotism of love; they tried to tell what they had thought of each other from the first moment they met, and tried to make out that they neither had ever since had a thought that was not the other's; they believed this. The commonplaces of the passion ever since it began to refine itself from the earliest savage impulse, seemed to have occurred to them for the first time in the history of the race; they accused themselves each of not being worthy of the other; they desired to be very good, and to live for the highest things.

They began this life by spending the whole afternoon together. When some other people came into the parlor, they went out to walk. They walked so

long and far, that they came at last to the Park without meaning to, and sat on a bench by a rock. Other people were doing the same: nurses with baby-carriages before them; men smoking and reading; elderly husbands with their elderly wives beside them, whom they scarcely spoke to; it must have been a very common, idle thing, but to them it had the importance, the distinction of something signal, done for the first time. They staid there till it was almost dark, and then they went and had tea together in the restaurant of one of the vast hotels at the entrance of the Park. It was a very Philistine place, with rich-looking, dull-looking people, travellers and sojourners, dining about in its spacious splendor; but they got a table in a corner and were as much alone there as in the Park; their happiness seemed to push the world away from them wherever they were, and to leave them free within a wide circle of their own. She poured the tea for them both from the pot which the waiter set at her side; he looked on in joyful wonder and content. "How natural it all is," he sighed. "I should think you had always been doing that for me. But I suppose it is only from the beginning of time!"

She let him talk the most, because she was too glad to speak, and because they had both the same thoughts,

and it did not need two to utter them. Now and then, he made her speak; he made her answer some question; but it was like some question that she had asked herself. From time to time they spoke of others besides themselves; of her mother and the Burtons, of Charmian, of Mrs. Westley, of Wetmore; but it was in relation to themselves; without this relation, nothing had any meaning.

When they parted after an evening prolonged till midnight in Mrs. Montgomery's parlor, that which had been quiescent in Cornelia's soul, stirred again, and she knew that she was wrong to let Ludlow go without telling him of Dickerson. It was the folly of that agreement of theirs about painting Charmian repeating itself in slightly different terms, and with vastly deeper meaning, but to a like end of passive deceit, of tacit untruth; his wish did not change it. She thought afterwards she could not have let him go without telling him, if she had not believed somehow that the parallel would complete itself, and that he would come back, as he had done before, and help her undo what was false between them; but perhaps this was not so; perhaps if she had been sure he would not come back she would not have spoken; at any rate he did not come back.

XXXV.

CORNELIA was left to no better counsels than those of Charmian Maybough, and these were disabled from what they might have been at their best, by Cornelia's failure to be frank with her. If she was wronging Charmian by making her a half-confidant only, she could not be more open with her than with Ludlow, and she must let her think that she had told him everything until she had told him everything.

She did honestly try to do so, from time to time; she tried to lead him on to ask her what it was he had kept her from telling him in that first moment of their newly confessed love, when it would have been easier than it could ever be again. She reproached him in her heart for having prevented her then; it seemed as if he must know that she was longing for his help to be frank; but she never could make that cry for his help pass her lips where it trembled when she ought to have felt safest with him. She began to be afraid of him, and he began to be aware of her fear.

He went home after parting with her that first night

of their engagement too glad of all that was, to feel any lack in it; but the first thought in his mind when he woke the next morning was not that perfect joy which the last before he fell asleep had been. His discomfort was a formless emotion at first, and it was a moment before it took shape in the mistake he had made, in forbidding Cornelia to tell him what she had kept from him, merely because he knew that she wished to keep it. He ought to have been strong enough for both, and he had joined his weakness to hers from a fantastic impulse of generosity. Now he perceived that the truth, slighted and postponed, must right itself at the cost of the love which it should have been part of. He began to be tormented with a curiosity to know what he could not ask, or let her suspect that he even wished to know. Whether he was with her or away from her, he always had that in his mind, and in the small nether ache, inappeasable and incessant, he paid the penalty of his romantic folly. He had to bear it and to hide it. Yet they both seemed flawlessly happy to others, and in a sort they seemed so to themselves. They waited for the chance that should make them really so.

Cornelia kept on at her work, all the more devotedly because she was now going home so soon and because

she knew herself divided from it by an interest which made art seem slight and poor, when she felt secure in her happiness, and made it seem nothing when her heart misgave her. She never could devolve upon that if love failed her; art could only be a part of her love henceforward. She could go home and help her mother with her work till she died, if love failed her, but she could never draw another line.

There was going to be an exhibition of Synthesis work at the close of the Synthesis year, and there was to be a masquerade dance in the presence of the pictures. Charmian was the heart and soul of the masquerade, and she pushed its claims to the disadvantage of the exhibition. Some of the young ladies who thought that art should have the first place, went about saying that she was for the dance because she could waltz and mask better than she could draw, and would rather exhibit herself than her work, but it was a shame that she should make Miss Saunders work for her the way she did, because Miss Saunders, though she was so overrated, was really learning something, thanks to the Synthesis atmosphere; and Charmian Maybough would never learn anything. It was all very well for her to pretend that she scorned to send anything to a school exhibition, but she was at least

not such a simpleton as to risk offering anything, for it would not be accepted. That, they said, was the real secret of her devotion to the masquerade and of her theory that the spirit of the Synthesis could be expressed as well in making that beautiful, as in the exhibition. Charmian had Cornelia come and stay with her the whole week before the great event, and she spent it in a tumult of joyful excitement divided between the tremendous interests of Ludlow's coming every night to see Cornelia, and of having them both advise with her about her costume. Ludlow was invited to the dance, and he was to be there so as to drive home with her and Cornelia.

In the mean time Charmian's harshest critics were not going to be outdone, if they could help it, in any way; they not only contributed to the exhibition, but four or five days beforehand they began to stay away from the Synthesis, and get up their costumes for the masquerade. Everything was to be very simple, and you could come in costume or not, as you pleased, but the consensus was that people were coming in costume, and you would not want to look odd.

The hall for the dancing was created by taking down the board partitions that separated three of the class-rooms; and hanging the walls with cheese-cloth

to hide the old stains and paint-marks, and with pictures by the instructors. There was a piano for the music, and around the wall rough benches were put, with rugs over them to save the ladies' dresses. The effect was very pretty, with palettes on nails, high up, and tall flowers in vases on brackets, and a life-study in plaster by one of the girls, in a corner of the room. It all had the charm of tasteful design yielding here and there to happy caprice; this mingling of the ordered and the bizarre, expressed the spirit, at once free and submissive, of the place. There had been a great deal of trouble which at times seemed out of all keeping with the end to be gained, but when it was all over, the trouble seemed nothing. The exhibition was the best the Synthesis had ever made, and those who had been left out of it were not the least of those in the masquerade; they were by no means the worst dressed, or when they unmasked, the plainest, and Charmian's favorite maxim that art was all one, was verified in the costumes of several girls who could not draw any better than she could. If they were not on the walls in one way neither were they in another. After they had wandered heart-sick through the different rooms, and found their sketches nowhere, they had their compensation when the dancing began.

The floor was filled early, and the scene gathered gayety and brilliancy. It had the charm that the taste of the school could give in the artistic effects, and its spirit of generous comradery found play in the praises they gave each other's costumes, and each other's looks when they were not in costume. It was a question whether Cornelia who came as herself, was lovelier than Charmian, who was easily recognizable as Cleopatra, with ophidian accessories in her dress that suggested at once the serpent of old Nile, and a Moqui snake-dancer. Cornelia looked more beautiful than ever; her engagement with Ludlow had come out and she moved in the halo of poetic interest which betrothal gives a girl with all other girls; it was thought an inspiration that she should not have come in costume, but in her own character. Ludlow's fitness to carry off such a prize was disputed; he was one of the heroes of the Synthesis, and much was conceded to him because he had more than once replaced the instructor in still-life there. But there remained a misgiving with some whether Cornelia was right in giving up her art for him; whether she were not recreant to the Synthesis in doing that; the doubt, freshly raised by her beauty, was not appeased till Charmian met it with the assertion that Cornelia was

not going to give up her art at all, but after her marriage was coming back to study and paint with Ludlow.

Charmian bore her honors graciously, both as the friend of the new fiancée, and as the most successful mask of the evening. In her pride and joy, she set the example of looking out for girls who were not having a good time, and helping them to have one with the men of her own too constant following, and with those who stood about, wanting the wish or the courage to attach themselves to any one. In the excitement she did not miss Cornelia, or notice whether Ludlow had come yet. When she did think of her it was to fancy that she was off somewhere with him, and did not want to be looked up. Before the high moment when one of the instructors appeared, and chose a partner for the Virginia Reel, Charmian had fused all the faltering and reluctant temperaments in the warmth of her amiability. Nobody ever denied her good nature, in fact, whatever else they denied her, and there were none who begrudged her its reward at last. She was last on the floor, when the orchestra, having played as long as it had bargained to, refused to play any longer, and the dance came to an end. She then realized that it was after twelve, and she remembered Cornelia. She rushed down into

the dressing-room, and found her sitting there alone, bonneted and wrapped for the street. There was something suddenly strange and fateful about it all to Charmian.

"Cornelia!" she entreated. "What is the matter? What has become of Mr. Ludlow? Hasn't he been here to-night?"

Cornelia shook her head, and made a hoarse murmur in her throat, as if she wished to speak and could not. There seemed to be some sort of weight upon her, so that she could not rise, but Charmian swiftly made her own changes of toilet necessary for the street, and got Cornelia out of doors and into her coupé which was waiting for them, before the others descended from the dancing-room, where the men staid to help the janitor put out the lights. As the carriage whirled them away, they could hear the gay cries and laughter of the first of the revellers who came out into the night after them.

XXXVI.

The solemn man-servant, who was now also sleepy, but who saved the respect due the young ladies by putting his hand over a yawn when he let them in, brought Cornelia a letter which he seemed to have been keeping on his professional salver. "A letter for you, miss. It came about an hour after you went out. The messenger said he wasn't to wait for an answer, and Mrs. Maybough thought she needn't send it to you at the Synthesis. She wanted me to tell you, miss."

"Oh, it is all right, thank you," said Cornelia, with a tremor which she could not repress at the sight of Ludlow's handwriting.

Charmian put her arm round her. "Come into the studio, dear. You can answer it there, if you want to, at once."

"Well," said Cornelia, passively.

Charmian found her sitting with the letter in her lap, as if she had not moved from her posture while she had been away exchanging her Plotemaic travesty

for the ease of a long silken morning gown of Nile green. She came back buttoning it at her throat, when she gave a start of high tragic satisfaction at something stonily rigid in Cornelia's attitude, but she kept to herself both her satisfaction and the poignant sympathy she felt at the same time, and sank noiselessly into a chair by the fireless hearth.

After a moment Cornelia stirred and asked, "Do you want to see it, Charmian?"

"Do you want me to?" Charmian asked back, with her heart in her throat, lest the question should make Cornelia change her mind.

There were two lines from Ludlow, unsigned: "I have received the enclosed letter, which I think you should see before I see you again." His note enclosed a letter from Dickerson to Ludlow, which ran: "Although you are a stranger to me, I feel an old friend's interest in your engagement to Miss Cornelia Saunders, of which I have just been informed. I can fully endorse your good taste. Was once engaged to the young lady myself some years since, and have been in correspondence with her up to a very recent date. Would call and offer my well wishes in person, but am unexpectedly called away on business. Presume Miss Saunders has told you of our little affair,

so will not enlarge upon the facts. Please give her my best regards and congratulations.

Yours respect'ly,

J. B. DICKERSON."

Charmian let the papers fall to her lap, and looked at Cornelia who stared blankly, helplessly back at her. "What a hateful, spiteful little cad!" she began, and she enlarged at length upon Mr. Dickerson's character and behavior. She arrested herself in this pleasure, and said, "But I don't understand why Mr. Ludlow should have staid away this evening on account of his letter, or why he should have sent it to you, if he knew about it already. It seems to me" —

"He didn't know about it," said Cornelia. "I haven't told him yet."

"Why, Cornelia!"

The reproachful superiority in Charmian's tone was bitter to Cornelia, but she did not even attempt to resent it. She said meekly, "I did try to tell him. I wanted to tell him the very first thing, but he wouldn't let me, then; and then — I couldn't."

Charmian's superiority melted into sympathy: "Of course," she said.

"And now, I never can tell him," Cornelia desperately concluded.

"Never!" Charmian assented. The gleam of common-sense which had visited her for an instant, was lost in the lime-light of romance, which her fancy cast upon the situation. "And what are you going to do?" she asked, enraptured by its hopeless gloom.

"Nothing. What can I do?"

"No. You can do nothing." She started, as with a sudden inspiration. "Why, look here, Cornelia! Why wouldn't this do?"

She stopped so long that Cornelia asked, somewhat crossly, "Well?"

"I don't know whether I'd better tell you. But I know it would be the very thing. Do you want me to tell you?"

"Oh, it makes no difference," said Cornelia, hopelessly.

Charmian went on tentatively, "Why, it's this. I've often heard of such things: Me to pretend that *I* wrote this horrid Dickerson letter, and there isn't any such person; but I did it just for a joke, or wanted to break off the engagement because I couldn't bear to give you up. Don't you see? It's like lots of things on the stage, and I've read of them. I'd be perfectly willing to sacrifice myself in such a cause, and I should have to, for after I said I had done such a thing

as that, he would never let you speak to me again, or look at me, even. But I should die happy" — She stopped, frozen to silence, by the scornful rejection in Cornelia's look. "Oh, no, no! It wouldn't do! I see it wouldn't! Don't speak! But there's nothing else left, that I know of." She added, by another inspiration, "Or, yes! Now — *now* — we can live for each other, Cornelia. You will outlive this. You will be terribly changed, of course; and perhaps your health may be affected; but I shall always be with you from this on. I have loved you more truly than he ever did, if he can throw you over for a little thing like that. If I were a man I should exult to ignore such a thing. Oh, if men could only be what girls would be if they were men! But now you must begin to forget him from this instant — to put him out of your mind — your life."

To further this end Charmian talked of Ludlow for a long time, and entered upon a close examination of his good and bad qualities; his probable motives for now behaving as he was doing, and the influence of the present tragedy upon his future as a painter. It would either destroy him or it would be the fire out of which he would rise a master; he would degenerate into a heartless worldling, which he might very well do, for

he was fond of society, or he might become a gloomy recluse, and produce pictures which the multitude would never know were painted with tears and blood. "Of course, I don't mean literally; the idea is rather disgusting; but you know what I mean, Cornelia. He may commit suicide, like that French painter, Robert; but he doesn't seem one of that kind, exactly; he's much more likely to abandon art and become an art-critic. Yes, it may make an art-critic of him."

Cornelia sat in a heavy muse, hearing and not hearing what she said. Charmian bustled about, and made a fire of lightwood, and then kindled her spirit lamp, and made tea, which she brought to Cornelia. "We may as well take it," she said. "We shall not sleep to-night anyway. What a strange ending to our happy evening. It's perfectly Hawthornesque. Don't you think it's like the *Marble Faun*, somehow? I believe you will rise to a higher life through this trouble, Cornelia, just as Donatello did through his crime. I can arrange it with mamma to be with you; and if I can't I shall just simply abandon her, and we will take a little flat like two newspaper girls that I heard of, and live together. We will get one down-town, on the East Side."

Cornelia took the tea and drank it, but she could not speak. It would have been easier to bear if she had only had herself alone to blame, but mixed with her shame, and with her pity for him, was a sense of his want of wisdom in refusing to let her speak at once, when she wanted to tell him all about Dickerson. That was her instinct; she had been right, and he wrong; she might be to blame for everything since, but he was to blame then and for that. Now it was all wrong, and past undoing. She tried, in the reveries running along with what she was hearing of Charmian's talk, every way of undoing it that she could imagine: she wrote to Ludlow; she sent for him; she went to him; but it was all impossible. She did not wish to undo the wrong that she might have back her dream of happiness again; she had been willing to be less than true, and she could wish him to know that she hated herself for that.

It went on and on, in her brain; there was no end to it; no way to undo the snarl that life had tangled itself up into. She looked at the clock on the mantel, and saw that it was three o'clock. "Why don't you go to bed?" she asked Charmian.

"I shall not go to bed, I shall never go to bed," said Charmian darkly. She added, "If you'll come with me, I will."

"I can't," said Cornelia, with a sort of dry anguish. She rose from where she had been sitting motionless so long. "Let me lie down on that couch of yours, there. I'm tired to death."

She went toward the alcove curtained off from the studio, and Charmian put her arm round her to stay her and help.

"Don't. I can get along perfectly well."

"I will lie down here with you," said Charmian. "You won't mind?"

"No, I shall like to have you."

Cornelia shivered as she sat down on the edge of this divan, and Charmian ran back to put another stick of lightwood on the fire, and turn the gas down to a blue flame. She pulled down rugs and draperies, and dragged them toward the alcove for covering. "Oh, how different it is from the way I always supposed it would be when I expected to sleep here!" She sank her voice to a ghostly whisper, and yawned. "Now you go to sleep, Cornelia; but if you want anything I shall be watching here beside you, and you must ask me. Would you like anything now? An olive, or a — cracker?"

"Nothing," said Cornelia, tumbling wearily upon the couch.

Charmian surveyed her white, drawn face with profound appreciation. Then she stretched herself at her side, and in a little while Cornelia knew by her long, regular breathing that she had found relief from the stress of sympathy in sleep.

XXXVII.

The cold north-light of the studio showed that it was broad day when a tap at the door roused Cornelia from a thin drowse she had fallen into at dawn. She stirred, and Charmian threw herself from the couch to her feet. "Don't move — I'll get it — let me" — She tossed back the black mane that fell over her eyes and stared about her. "What — what is it? Have I been asleep? Oh, I never can forgive myself!"

The tapping at the door began again, and she ran to open it. The inexorable housemaid was there; she said that Mrs. Maybough was frightened at her not finding either of the young ladies in their rooms, and had sent her to see if they were in the studio.

"Yes, tell her we are, please; we fell asleep on the couch, please; and, Norah! we want our breakfast here. We are very — busy, and we can't be disturbed."

She twisted her hair into a loose knot, and cowered over the hearth, where she kindled some pieces of

lightwood, and then sat huddled before it, watching the murky roll of its flames, till the maid came back with the tray. Charmian wished to bring Cornelia a cup of coffee where she still lay, so crushed with the despair that had rolled back upon her with the first consciousness that she thought she never could rise again. But as the aroma of the coffee that Charmian poured out stole to her, she found strength to lift herself on her elbow, and say, "No, I will take it there with you."

The maid had put the tray on the low table where Charmian usually served tea, but in spite of all the poignant associations of this piece of furniture with happier times, the two girls ate hungrily of the omelette and the Vienna rolls; and by the time the maid had put the studio in order, and beaten up the cushions of the couch into their formal shape, they had cleared the tray, and she took it away with her quite empty. Even in the house of mourning, and perhaps there more than elsewhere, the cravings of the animal, which hungers and thirsts on, whatever happens, satisfy themselves, while the spirit faints and despairs.

Perhaps if Cornelia had thought of it she would not have chosen to starve to no visible end, but she did not think, and she ate ravenously as long as there was anything left, and when she had eaten, she felt so

much stronger in heart and clearer in mind. that after the maid had gone she began, "Charmian, I am going home, at once, and you mustn't try to stop me; I mean to Mrs. Montgomery's. I want to write to Mr. Ludlow. I shall tell him it is all true."

"Cornelia!"

"Yes; what else could I tell him?"

"Oh, you must! But must you write it?"

"Yes; I never can see him again, and I won't let him think that I want to, or to have him forgive me. He was to blame, but I was the most, for he might have thought it was just some little thing, and I knew what it was, and that it was something he ought to know at once. He will always believe now that it was worse than it is, if anything can be worse. I shall tell him that after I had seen Mr. Dickerson again, and knew just what a — a dreadful thing he was, I tolerated him, and lured him on" —

"You *didn't* lure him on, and I won't let you say such a thing, Cornelia Saunders," Charmian protested. "You always did profess to have sense, and that isn't sense."

"I never had any sense," said Cornelia, "I can see that now. I have been a perfect fool from the beginning."

"You may have been a fool," said Charmian, judicially, "but you have not been false, and I am not going to let you say so. If you don't promise not to, I will tell Mr. Ludlow myself that you were always perfectly true, and you couldn't help being true, any more than a — a broomstick, or anything else that is perpendicular. Now, will you promise?"

"I will tell him just how everything was, and he can judge. But what difference? It's all over, and I wouldn't help it if I could."

"Yes, I know that," said Charmian, "but that's all the more reason why you shouldn't go and say more than there is. He can't think, even if you're just to yourself, that you want to — wheedle."

"Wheedle!" cried Cornelia.

"Well, not wheedle, exactly, but what would *be* wheedling in some other girl — in me," said Charmian, offering herself up. "Will you let me see the letter before you send it? I do believe I've got more sense than you have about such things, this minute."

"You wouldn't have any to brag of, even then," said Cornelia with gloomy meekness, and unconscious sarcasm. "Yes, I will let you see the letter."

"Well, then, you needn't go home to write it; you can write in your room here. I want to see that let-

ter, and I sha'n't let it go if there's the least thing wrong in it." She jumped up gayly, as if this were the happiest possible solution of the whole difficulty, and began to push Cornelia out of the room. "Now go, and after you've put yourself in shape, and got your hair done, you'll have some self-respect. I suppose you won't begin to write till you're all as spick and span as if you were going to receive a call from him. I'm such a slouch that I should just sit down and write, looking every which-way — but I know you can't."

She came back to the studio an hour later, and waited impatiently for Cornelia's appearance. She was so long coming that Charmian opened the door, to go and ask her some question, so as to get her to say that she would be with her in a moment, even if she didn't come, and almost ran against the man-servant, who was bringing her a card. She gave a little nervous shriek, and caught it from his salver.

"For Miss Saunders, miss," he said, in respectful deprecation of her precipitate behavior.

"Yes, yes; it's all right. Say that she — *is in the studio.*" Charmian spoke in thick gasps. The card was Ludlow's; and between the man's going and Ludlow's coming, she experienced a succession of sensa-

tions which were, perhaps, the most heroically perfect of any in a career so much devoted to the emotions. She did not stop to inquire what she should do after she got Ludlow there, or to ask herself what he was coming for, a little after nine o'clock in the morning; she simply waited his approach in an abandon which exhausted the capabilities of the situation, and left her rather limp and languid when he did appear. If it had been her own affair she could not have entered into it with more zeal, more impassioned interest. So far as she reasoned her action at all, it was intended to keep Ludlow, after she got him there, till Cornelia should come, for she argued that if she should go for her Cornelia would suspect something, and she would not come at all.

XXXVIII.

When Ludlow found Charmian and not Cornelia waiting for him, he managed to get through the formalities of greeting decently, but he had an intensity which he had the effect of not allowing to relax. He sat down with visible self-constraint when Charmian invited him to do so.

"Miss Saunders has just gone to her room; she'll be back in a moment." She added, with wild joy in a fact which veiled the truth, "She is writing a note."

"Oh!" said Ludlow, and he was so clearly able not to say anything more that Charmian instantly soared over him in smooth self-possession. "We were so sorry not to see you last night, Mr. Ludlow. It was a perfect success, except your not coming, of course."

"Thank you," said Ludlow, "I was — I couldn't come — at the last moment."

"Yes, I understood you intended to come. I do wish you could have seen Miss Saunders! I don't believe she ever looked lovelier. I wanted her to go in costume, you know, but she wouldn't, and in fact

when I saw her, I saw that she needn't. She doesn't have to eke herself out, as some people do."

Ludlow was aware of the opening for a civil speech, but he was quite helpless to use it. He stared blankly at Charmian, who went on:

"And then, Cornelia is so perfectly truthful, you know, so sincere, that any sort of disguise would have been out of character with her, and I'm glad she went simply as herself. We were up so late talking, that we slept till I don't know when, this morning. I forgot to wind my clock. I suppose it's very late."

"No," said Ludlow, "it's so very early that I ought to apologize for coming, I suppose. But I wished to see Miss Saunders" — He stopped, feeling that he had given too rude a hint.

Charmian did not take it amiss. "Oh, Cornelia is usually up at all sorts of unnatural hours of the day. I expected when she came here to spend the week with me, we should have some fun, sitting up and talking, but last night is the only time we have had a real good talk, and I suppose that was because we were so excited that even Cornelia couldn't go to sleep at once. I do wish you could have seen some of the costumes, Mr. Ludlow!"

Ludlow began to wonder whether Cornelia had got

his letter, or whether, if she had got it, she had kept the matter so carefully from Charmian that she had not suspected anything was wrong. Or, what was more likely, had not Cornelia cared? Was she glad to be released, and had she joyfully hailed his letter and its enclosure as a means of escape? His brain reeled with these doubts, which were the next moment relieved with the crazy hope that if his letter had not yet been delivered, he might recover it, and present the affair in the shape he had now come to give it. He believed that Charmian must have some motive for what she was doing and saying beyond the hospitable purpose of amusing him till Cornelia should appear. We always think that other people have distinct motives, but for the most part in our intercourse with one another we are really as superficially intentioned, when we are intentioned at all, as Charmian was in wishing to get what sensation she could out of the dramatic situation by hovering darkly over it, and playing perilously about its circumference. She divined that he was not there to deepen its tragical tendency at least, and she continued without well knowing what she was going to say next: "Yes, I think that the real reason why Cornelia wouldn't go in costume was that she felt that it was a kind of subterfuge. She keeps me in a

perfect twitter of self-reproach. I tell her I would rather have the conscience of the worst kind of person than hers; I could get along with it a great deal easier. Don't you think you could, Mr. Ludlow?"

"Yes, yes," said Ludlow aimlessly. He rose up, and pretended a curiosity about a sketch on the wall; he could not endure to sit still.

"Won't you have a cup of tea?" asked Charmian. "Cornelia and I had some last night, and" —

"No, thank you," said Ludlow.

"Do let me ring for some coffee, then?"

"No, I have just breakfasted — that is, I have breakfasted" —

"Why, were *you* up early, too?" said Charmian, with what seemed to Ludlow a supernatural shrewdness. "It's perfectly telepathic! The Psychical Research ought to have it. It would be such fun if we could get together and compare our reasons for waking so early. But Cornelia and I didn't know just when we did wake, and I suppose the Psychical Research wouldn't care for it without. She seems to be writing a pretty long note, or a pretty hard one!" Ludlow lifted his downcast eyes, and gave her a look that was ghastly. "Did you look at your watch?" she asked.

"Look at my watch?" he returned in a daze.

"When you woke, that is."

"Oh!" he groaned.

"Because" —

Charmian suddenly stopped and ran to the door, which Cornelia opened before she could reach it.

Cornelia gave her a letter. "See if this will do," she said spiritlessly, and Charmian caught it from her hand.

"Yes, yes, I'll read it," she said, as she slipped out of the door and shut Cornelia in.

Cornelia saw Ludlow, and made an instinctive movement of flight.

"For pity's sake, don't go!" he implored.

"I didn't know you were here," she said, the same dejection in her tone.

"No, they told me you were here; but let me stay long enough to tell you — That abominable letter — you ought never to have known that it existed. I don't expect you to forgive me; I don't ask you; but I am so ashamed; and I would do anything if I could recall — undo — Cornelia! *Isn't* there any way of atoning for it? Come! I don't believe a word of that scoundrel's. I don't know what his motive was, and I don't care. Let it all be as if nothing of the

kind had ever happened. Dearest, don't speak of it, and I never will!"

Cornelia was tempted. She could see how he had wrought himself up to this pitch, and she believed that he would keep his word; we believe such miracles of those we love, before life has taught us that love cannot make nature err against itself. In his absence the duty she had to do was hard; in his presence it seemed impossible, now when he asked her not to do it. She had not expected ever to see him again, or to be tried in this way. She had just written it all to him, but she must speak it now. She had been weak, and had brought on herself the worst she had to tell, and should she be false, even though he wished it, and not tell?

She forced the words out in a voice that hardly seemed her own at first.

"No, we made a mistake; you did, and I did, too. There was something — something — I wanted to tell you at first, but you wouldn't let me, and I was glad you wouldn't; but it was all wrong, and now I have got to tell you, when everything is over, and it can never do any good." She gave a dry sob, and cast upon him a look of keen reproach, which he knew he deserved. "I *was* engaged to him once.

Or," she added, as if she could not bear to see him blench, "he could think so. It was the year after you were in Pymantoning."

She went on and told him everything. She did not spare herself any fact that she thought he ought to know, and as she detailed the squalid history, it seemed to her far worse than it had ever been in her own thoughts of it.

He listened patiently, and at the end he asked, "Is that all?"

"All?"

"Yes. I wanted to know just how much you have to forgive me." She looked at him stupefied. "Yes, I ought to have let you tell me all this before, when you wanted to, at first. But I have been a romantic fool, and I have made you suffer for my folly. I have left you to think, all the time, that I might care for this; that I might not know that you were yourself through it all, or that I could care for you any the less because of it, when it only makes you dearer to me."

"No!" she said for all protest, and he understood.

"Oh, I don't mean that you were always right in it, or always wise; but I can truly say it makes no difference with me except to make you dearer. If I

had always had more sense than I had, you would not have to blame yourself for the only wrong or unwise thing you have done, and I am really to blame for that."

She knew that he meant her having taken refuge from his apparent indifference in Dickerson, when she fell below her ideal of herself. This was what she had thought at the time; it was the thought with which she had justified herself then, and she could not deny it now. She loved him for taking her blame away, and she said to strengthen herself for her doom, "Well, it is all over!"

"No," he said, "why is it over? Don't be worse than I was. Let us be reasonable about it! Why shouldn't we talk of it as if we were other people? Do you mean it is all over because you think I must be troubled by what you've told me, or because you can't forgive me for not letting you tell me before?"

"You know which!" she said.

"Well, then, what should you think of some other man if he could care for such a thing, when some other girl had told it him of herself? You would think him very unjust and"—

"But it isn't some other man; it isn't some other girl!"

"No, I'm glad it isn't. But can't we reason about it as if it were?"

"No, we can't. It would be — wicked."

"It would be wicked not to. Do you think you ought to break our engagement because I didn't let you tell me this at first?"

Cornelia could not say that she did; she could hardly say, "I don't know."

Ludlow assumed that she had said more. "Then if you don't think you ought to do it for that, do you think you ought to do it for nothing?"

"For nothing?" Cornelia asked herself. Was there really nothing else, then? She stood looking at him, as if she were asking him that aloud. He was not so far off as when they began to talk, just after they had risen, and now he suddenly came much nearer still.

"Are you going to drive me from you because I don't care for all this?"

"You ought to care," she persisted.

"But if I don't? If I can't? Then what is the reason you won't let it all be as if nothing had happened? Ah, I see! You can't forgive me for sending you his letter! Well, I deserve to be punished for that!"

"No; I should have despised you if you hadn't" —
"Well?"

She was silent, looking at the floor. He put his arm round her, and pushed her head down on his shoulder. "Oh, how silly!" she said, with lips muted against his own.

XXXIX.

Cornelia and Ludlow were married at Pymantoning in the latter part of June, and he spent the summer there, working at a picture which he was going to exhibit in the fall. At the same time he worked at a good many other pictures, and he helped Cornelia with the things she was trying. He painted passages and incidents in her pictures, sometimes illustratively, and sometimes for the pleasure of having their lives blended in their work, and he tried to see how nearly he could lose his work in hers. He pretended that he learned more than he taught in the process, and that he felt in her efforts a determining force, a clear sense of what she wanted to do, that gave positive form and direction to what was vague and speculative in himself. He was strenuous that she should not, in the slightest degree, lapse from her ideal and purpose, or should cease to be an artist in becoming a wife. He contended that there was no real need of that, and though it had happened in most of the many cases where

artists had married artists, he held that it had happened through the man's selfishness and thoughtlessness, and not through the conditions. He was resolved that Cornelia should not lose faith in herself from want of his appreciation, or from her own overvaluation of his greater skill and school; and he could prove to any one who listened that she had the rarer gift. He did not persuade her, with all his reasons, but her mother faithfully believed him. It had never seemed surprising to her that Cornelia should win a man like Ludlow; she saw no reason why Cornelia should not; and she could readily accept the notion of Cornelia's superiority when he advanced it. She was not arrogant about it; she was simply and entirely satisfied; and she was every moment so content with Cornelia's husband that Cornelia herself had to be a little critical of him in self-defence. She called him a dreamer and theorist; she ran him down to the Burtons, and said he would never come to anything, because artists who talked well never painted so well. She allowed that he talked divinely, and it would not have been safe for Mrs. Burton to agree with her otherwise; but Mrs. Burton was far too wise a woman to do so. She did not, perhaps, ride so high a horse as Mrs. Saunders in her praises of Ludlow, but

it would have been as impossible to unseat her. She regarded herself as somehow the architect of Cornelia's happiness in having discovered Ludlow and believed in him long before Cornelia met him, and she could easily see that if he had not come out to visit Burton, that first time, they would never have met at all. Mrs. Saunders could joyfully admit this without in the least relinquishing her own belief, so inarticulate that it was merely part of her personal consciousness, that this happiness was of as remote an origin as the foundations of the world. She could see, now, that nothing else could have been intended from the beginning, but she did not fail at the same time to credit herself with forethought and wisdom in bracing Cornelia against the overtures of Dickerson when he reappeared in her life. Burton, of course, advanced no claim to recognition in the affair. He enjoyed every moment of Ludlow's stay in Pymantoning, and gave his work a great deal of humorous attention and gratuitous criticism, especially the picture he was chiefly engaged upon. This, when it was shown at the County Fair, where Ludlow chose to enter it, before he took it back to New York with him in the fall, did not keep the crowd away from the trotting-matches, and it did not take either the first or the

second premium. In fact, if the critics of the metropolis were right in their judgment of it when it appeared later in the Academy, it did not deserve either of them. They said that it was an offence to those who had hoped better things of the painter as time went on with him, and who would now find themselves snubbed by this return to his worst manner. Here, they said, was his palette again, with a tacit invitation to the public to make what it liked of the colors, as children did with the embers on the hearth, or the frost on the window. You paid your money and you took your choice as to what Mr. Ludlow meant by this extraordinary performance, if he really meant anything at all.

As far as it could be made out with the naked eye, it represented a clump of hollyhocks, with a slim, shadowy and uncertain young girl among them, and the painter had apparently wished to suggest a family resemblance among them all. To this end he had emphasized some facts of the girl's dress, accessories to his purpose, the petal-edged ruffle of her crimson silk waist, the flower-like flare of her red hat, and its finials of knotted ribbon; and in the hollyhocks he had recognized a girlishness of bearing, which he evidently hoped would appeal to a fantastic sympathy in the

spectator. The piece was called "Hollyhocks"; it might equally well be called "Girls," though when you had called it one or the other, it would be hard to say just what you were to do about it, especially with the impression curiously left by the picture that whether it was a group of girls, or a clump of hollyhocks, they were not in very good humor. The moment chosen, if one might judge from some suggestions of light, was that just before the breaking of a thunderstorm; the girl, if it was a girl, had flashed into sight round the corner of the house where the hollyhocks, if they were hollyhocks, were blowing outward in the first gust of the storm. It could not be denied that there was something fine in the wild toss and pull of the flowers, with the abandon of the storm in them; this was the best thing in the piece. It was probably intended to express a moment of electric passion; but there was something so forced, and at the same time so ineffectual in the execution of the feebly fantastic design, that it became the duty of impartial criticism, to advise Mr. Ludlow, if he must continue to paint at all, to paint either girls or flowers, but not both at once, or both together, or convertibly.

Ludlow did not mind these criticisms much, being pretty well used to that kind of thing, and feeling secure

of his public in any event; but Cornelia was deeply vexed. She knew that it must be evident to those who knew her and knew him that she was the girl and she was the hollyhocks, and though the origin of the picture was forever hid in the memories of their first meeting, she was aware of a measure of justice in the censure that condemned it for obscurity. She had not wished him to show it, but here, as often elsewhere, she found him helpless to yield to her, even though he confessed that she was right. He did not try to justify himself, and he did not explain himself very clearly. "I don't know how it is about one's work, exactly. Up to a certain point you are master over it, and it seems to belong absolutely to you; but beyond that it is its own master and does what it pleases with itself. Of course I could have kept from showing that picture, and yet — I must."

"Well, at least, then, you can keep from selling it," said Cornelia. "I want it; give it to me."

"My dear, I will buy it for you. Mrs. Maybough became the owner of the picture, yesterday, but I will offer her an advance on the price she paid."

Cornelia now thought she was really angry with him for the first time since their marriage. She would not speak at once, but when she did speak, it was to say,

"No, let her keep it. I know Charmian made her buy it, and I wouldn't like to take it from her. She has so much imagination that maybe she can see some meaning in it, and it will always be such a pleasure to her to explain it, even if she can't."

Charmian made the Ludlows a Bohemian dinner as soon as the people whom she wanted got back to town. She said it was a Bohemian dinner, and she asked artists, mostly; but of course she had the Westleys and their friend Mrs. Rangeley. There were several of the Synthesis girls, who said the Synthesis would never be itself again without Cornelia, and there were some of the students, nice fellows, whom Charmian had liked; there were, of course, the Wetmores. Ludlow's picture was in evidence in a place of honor, especially created for it, and Wetmore said, when they sat down at dinner, "Well, Ludlow, all *this* company can tell where you got your hollyhocks." Cornelia turned the color of the reddest in the picture, and Wetmore recognized her consciousness with the added remark, "Oh, you'll be in all his imaginative pictures, now, Mrs. Ludlow. That's the fate of the wife of an imaginative painter. But you really must get him to keep you out of his portraits."

Charmian checked herself in a wild laugh, and sent

Cornelia a look of fond and proud intelligence, which Mrs. Rangeley tapped, as it were, on its way up the length of the table. "O Mrs. Ludlow!" she entreated. "What is it? I hope it isn't professional envy! Is he afraid of Mr. Ludlow becoming too popular?"

Ludlow answered for his wife, "Mrs. Rangeley, that was worthy even of you," and he boldly kissed his hand to her.

The dinner was remembered for several weeks as one of the pleasantest people had ever been at, and it established Mrs. Maybough in such social acceptance that she was asked to the first of the Westley dinners, where swells prevailed, and where she was as null as any of them. But although Charmian was apparently radiant the whole evening, and would hardly let Cornelia go away at the end, she wanted her to stay so and talk it over, she had a girl's perverseness in not admitting the perfection of the occasion to Mrs. Maybough, when she said, "Well, my dear, I hope your dinner was Bohemian enough for you."

"Bohemian!" she retorted. "It wasn't Bohemian at all. You oughtn't to have taken the ladies away at coffee. They ought to have stayed and had cigarettes with the gentlemen."

"My dear, you know that the mere smell of tobacco makes you sick!"

"No matter, I should — if I could only have seen Cornelia Ludlow smoking — I should have been willing to *die*. And now — now, I'm afraid she's going to be perfectly respectable!"

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